

Hints To Aspirants

*Swami
Ramdas*

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By
SWAMI RAMDAS

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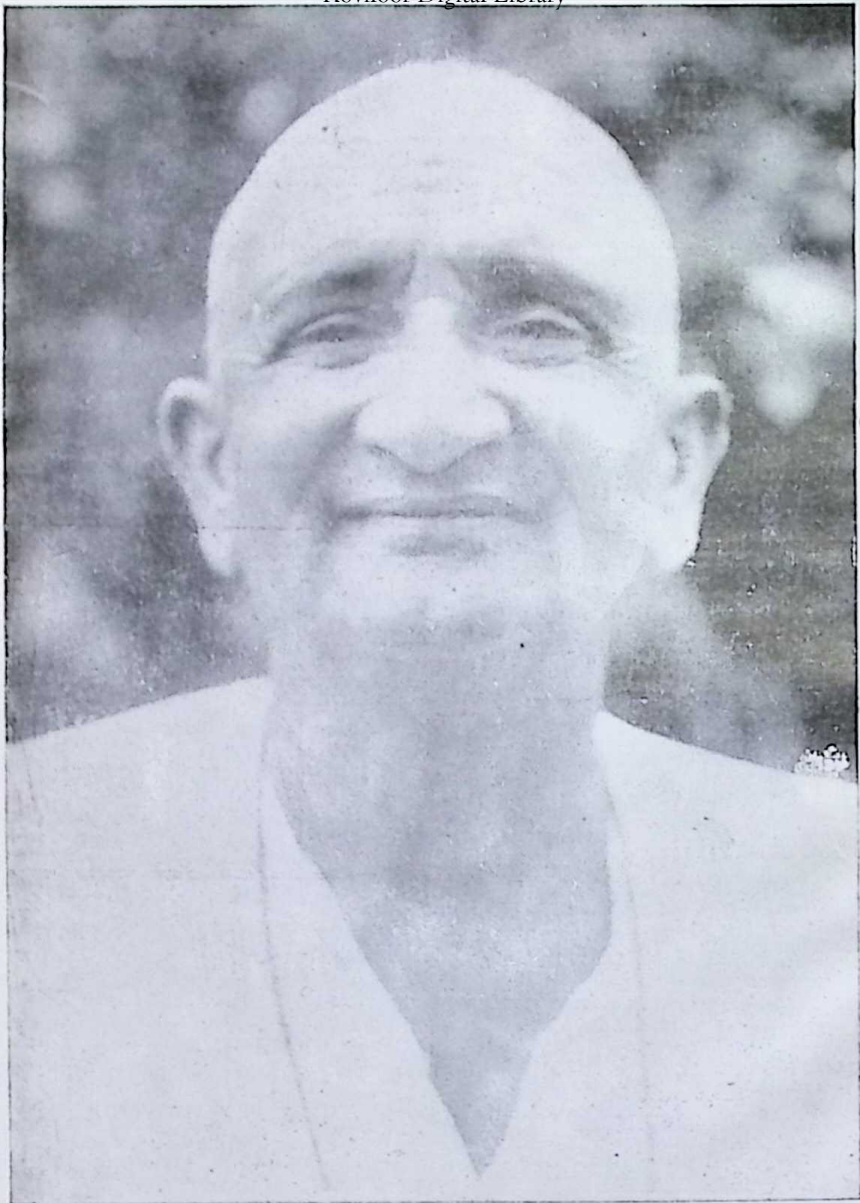
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Publishers' Note

We have great pleasure in presenting to earnest spiritual aspirants this book containing excerpts from Swami Ramdas' letters to his devotees the world over. We trust the seekers will find in the words of the Swamiji encouragement and inspiration for achieving the highest and loftiest vision of Truth.

Anandashram.

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BELOVED PAPA, SWAMI RAMDAS
(1884-1963)

HINTS TO ASPIRANTS

PART I

Guru is a spiritual guide. He is the enlightener of the aspirant's intellect. He transforms the consciousness of the aspirant and turns it from the world to God. As the word itself connotes, he is a giver of light. By the contact of such a one alone the soul is awakened to the reality of God. Truly, he is the redeemer and saviour of those who are immersed in ignorance. So it is essential that the aspirant should receive illumination from the Guru.

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Those who have realized God are like mirrors. Their lives both internal and external are absolutely pure and selfless. Man sees in them good or evil according to his mental make-up and attitude. If he is favourably inclined he sees in the great soul all that is true and good. But the same person, when he sees the great one with a prejudiced eye finds only untruth and evil in him. Just as a person who looks into the mirror with a smiling face causes a similar reflection in it, so also when he looks into it with a frowning and

angry face, he produces the same reflection in it. The great one is like a looking glass that mirrors the expressions of the face presented before it.

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If you wish to be a true spiritual aspirant, put down the ego whenever it raises its hood. Do not be self-assertive with regard to your relation with the world, but be self-controlled over the lower impulses of the mind. Be the master of your mind and the servant of the people around you. Ego is extremely elusive. It will disappear only when the light of a deep and abiding contemplation of the Divine within you floods your mind. When God is installed in the heart, ego has no place in it.

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An earnest spiritual aspirant should not sit in judgment upon saints and sages. It is his to imbibe, to the extent he is capable, the elevating radiations from these great souls and strive to purify his mind and find God within. Verily, he who is pure in heart can alone see God. So the first objective of an aspirant should be to free his mind from the down-pulling influences that enfeeble his will and lead him astray. Let Truth set fire to his mind so as to direct all its thoughts towards that eternal Sun of suns—the immortal Spirit of his being.

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A spiritual aspirant's bid is for immortality. His one aim is to realize God and discover his union with Him. To achieve this end he should transcend all relative human standards and conceptions. He should be perfectly fearless in his adventure into God's Kingdom. Fear, vacillation and doubt should have no place in his life. It must be understood that only intrepid souls fired with a burning zeal to know God and see Him can walk on the path and reach the goal.

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God draws the soul towards Him and the aspirant should respond to His call and let himself go, so that by His power he may travel towards Him and get united with Him. Resistance on the part of the aspirant is the cause of his failure and retrogression. So it is that many an aspirant is faced with a state of frustration often bordering on deep dejection and complete despair which is rightly called 'the dark night of the soul'. A heart steeled to the purpose can win the race. An unflinching steadiness, an unquenchable hope and an unshakable faith lead him to the summit of the divine life, radiance and joy. When his mind wanders away from the central object of its quest, it takes directly a downward course where it meets with darkness and defeat. This is the occasion for him to raise his heart in a spirit of

resignation towards God and surrender up his entire being into His hands. Such crucial psychological moments confront the life of all spiritual aspirants. At this stage distraction of every kind should be avoided with great care and watchfulness. Else, the aspirant will be lost to that fraternity of human souls who become the spiritual guides and lights of humanity.

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Grace is a word which is pregnant with so much divine power and glory that it defies definition. In brief it may be described as love and power of God. Such a love and power is ever pouring on all mankind, nay, on all creation, because this love and power dwells in and permeates all animate and inanimate objects of the world. But for Grace the worlds would neither exist nor live on. To realize in its fulness or comprehensiveness this Grace, in our individual lives and in the lives that surround us, is to liberate our life from the bondage of the mind and senses and transform it into the highest spiritual beatitude. So the struggle with an aspirant, whose ambition is to realize his union with God, is not to conquer any forces that seem to stand in his way but to recognise, believe and fully experience the power of Grace working in and through him. Even otherwise, Grace was still the dominating

factor of his life. But he was not aware of its existence as he was under the infatuation of a self-centered, ignorant and individualised life. As the aspirant tunes his mind and heart more and more with God, he feels the power of Grace and to that extent he will be drawn nearer Him. When he has come to know that Grace is the one thing that envelops him and pervades his entire being and but for it he is nowhere, his individual sense will disappear with the result that he will be like an arrow striking the target and melting away into it. Here the target is God. This is the positive way of approach. Here you do not contend against darkness but seek to reveal the light within you by understanding the redeeming and transforming power and influence of Grace. God is the sun and Grace is His light. God and Grace are one.

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Spiritual progress does not mean development only in one aspect of a human being. His emotional, intellectual and dynamic nature should evolve simultaneously. It is rightly said Karma is the foundation, Jnana the upper structure, and the dome at the top is Bhakti. It is now that the Temple of God is perfect. Sadhana done in a selfless spirit leads to the attainment of Jnana. Bhakti which is the essential quality of the heart, makes life gentle, loving and spontaneous. Jnana

equalises the vision, Bhakti fills compassion in the heart which overflows in loving acts of service. When the world is realized as the expression of God, the life of the devotee becomes a dedicated offering to Him. He lives and moves in pure and unending bliss.

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If you wish to live the life spiritual, you should have a strong moral background. You should be absolutely truthful and honest. Besides, you should be sincere to the core in your quest of the Divine. It is now that you put forth all your time and energy for achieving the goal. While you still cherish longings for worldly things, do not pretend that you are an earnest aspirant for the vision of the Divine. Be morally pure and be sincere and frank before God within you.

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Dharma is that which holds all together. The great Truth—God—is the source of all Dharma. When people unite themselves with Him, unity is realized. Unity is the basis on which the welfare and happiness of humanity depends. So in order to realize peace and harmony in the world, all people in it should turn their minds to God and find in Him the sure foundation of world peace and prosperity.

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It is not that we have to make the mind blank in meditation. Aridity of the mind is neither purity nor concentration. This is a dangerous state. The real thing is to fill the mind with Divine light, bliss and peace. It denotes fullness and perfection and not vacuity and dreariness. It is calm, self-existent, eternal consciousness—a consciousness that envelops, permeates and expresses all life and its activities.

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Purity is of the mind, the heart and the body. The mind sublimates into the Eternal stillness. The heart expands into infinite space in waves of love and kindness. The body becomes a radiant instrument for the Divine power to play its Lila in this universal change and movement.

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Renunciation signifies giving up what you had held dear in the world through a burning aspiration for the realization of your Self—God. It is not a state which is forcibly achieved, but it is the spontaneous result of yourself turning utterly to the Divine. When the one thought of God saturates your mind, naturally all other desires will disappear from it. Then the world and its objects lose all attraction for you. Your link or attachment to them gets broken. Now, you at once feel an inner freedom from the bond-

age of the flesh and all its cravings. In fact, for the time being, you turn your back entirely from the world of change, by facing the Supreme Light of lights—God. The external form which such a renunciation takes is a mere symbol, or expression, of the inner transformation and illumination. The perfection of spiritual experience consists in rising above all forms and standards, by realising the Divine in all aspects of life. This is really a state beyond renunciation and enjoyment. It is an all-round divinisation.

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Man, usually, sees all beings, objects and things in the world from his individual point of view. As such, he has cognizance only of diversity in the manifestation. This vision is the outcome of ignorance. When man is enlightened with the knowledge of the Supreme Spirit that dwells in him, he beholds the same Truth pervading everywhere, with the result that he realizes a continuous and unbroken unity in this apparent diversity. He further knows that this Spirit or Atman is eternal, changeless, and its nature is Light, Bliss and Peace. It is now that he, as the Supreme Spirit, witnesses all the movements and activities going on in this vast universe, remaining all the time unattached, unaffected and ever established

in absolute Peace and Joy. This vision is simply sublime.

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The nature of selfless Love is unalloyed joy. It is Love for Love's sake. In other words, Love here fulfills itself in loving. Such a Love has its root in eternity. It does not belong to the material aspect of life. So it springs from the immortal source of your being. In fact, it is the light and perfume of the Divine Spirit within you. Such a Love universalises your outlook, and brings about the fusion of the soul with God. When your heart overflows with Love towards all beings and creatures in the world, you experience a joy and ecstasy which is incomparable. God is defined as pure Bliss and Peace. So God is Love and Love is God.

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Watchfulness should be the principal trait in the nature of a Sadhaka, who is striving to purify and direct his mind towards the indwelling Reality. To let the mind conceive whatever thoughts it likes, and wander about without any check, and get itself entangled in a net of desires, causes the defeat of the Sadhaka in his attempt to push forward on the divine path. He should be alert, awake and heedful. He should closely watch the movements of his mind and gradually wean it away from the path of ignorance and guide it on

the path of knowledge. He should develop a witness-consciousness through meditation and self-surrender. It is a state of awareness of the immortal and radiant Truth within him. In fact, this awareness itself is God-realization.

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It does not behove you as a Sadhaka to detach yourself completely from the world. Unselfish service rendered to humanity helps you in developing an universal consciousness. Love and sympathy, self-sacrifice and service, softens the heart and purifies it. Tune your mind to the Divine within you, and beholding all beings and creatures as His expression, love and serve them. In this way you will be able to realize God within and without. To serve your fellow-beings is verily to serve God. In the last synthesis of an all-round spiritual experience, you realize that the whole universe is your body. Your love and service of any one in it will surely constitute love and service of yourself. You will do this not only with joy, but also without consciousness that you have done anything for another, just as your attending your physical needs does not make you think that you have done a great favour to your body.

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World peace can be a reality only when humanity has evolved a World State comprising all the nations of the world. This requires the attainment

of an universal outlook and vision on the part of the participants in this world organisation. This is possible only when the heart of mankind is awakened to the awareness of its inherent spiritual unity and oneness. All lives are the expressions of the same supreme, indwelling and all pervading Spirit.

With this background to the World State, which aims at happiness, harmony and prosperity of all the peoples inhabiting this globe, wherein no selfishness, territorial ambitions and a drive for domination and power can exist, the threat of conflict and war will diminish. All nations will work for the establishment of the great ideal of mutual love, help and goodwill. All the natural resources and scientific inventions will be utilised solely for the progress and prosperity of all human beings. This is the only way by which humanity can be saved from the devastating effects of a global war. May God who is seated in the hearts of us all awaken, inspire and guide us to the goal of this supreme consummation!

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There is no more potent power in the life of a human being than Love which ennobles, enlightens and sanctifies life. The heart imbued with this Love feels for the suffering humanity. It is this Love that freely forgives and returns good for evil, because it is born of the Divine

Spirit that dwells within you. It is the expression of Truth — the Light that radiates from your purified, illumined soul. Such a Love is the ideal to be aspired for. The person in whom it has revealed itself is really holy. He is the channel of God's power and glory.

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Prayer is the easy way of contacting God. When you raise your heart towards the Supreme Being and commune with him, you feel at first your nearness to Him and then your actual contact with Him, and ultimately your absorption into His Being. For, your heart, which is usually filled with gross and low desires, gets purified as your thoughts are concentrated on Him. Through a spirit of dedication, it melts and sublimates into the Divine Essence which is the source of your existence. Prayer infuses strength, courage and joy into your heart. It therefore teaches you how to bravely endure things and how to draw power and wisdom from the divine store-house.

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It is perfectly true that everything in the world happens by God's will alone. His power is invincible. To submit to this power means to permit it to work in and through you irresistibly, not only for your own elevation and liberation, but also for bringing light and joy to others. Resistance to the divine will and power means frustration

and misery. Therefore, recognise the truth that to look upon God as all in all can alone grant true freedom and peace.

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There is talk of war, fear of war and feverish attempt to dispel the clouds of war that seem to hang over us. In fact, the world does not want war. In the innate nature of man, there is hunger for peace. Still, among a certain section of people, there is a passion for war and the panic caused by it has spread all over the world. It is said rightly that the modern civilization is on its trial. If moral and spiritual values prevail, the waves of war-madness should cease in the minds of its protagonists. An universal uprising of a flaming aspiration for peace counteracting the war mentality can alone save the situation. Any day, moral forces are greater than the physical, and the spiritual force is the greatest of all. This force can triumph over all violent forces that work in nature. Such a force can be conserved and released for producing unity and harmony among the nations of the world. When men's hearts are free from the ambition for earthly power and suzerainty, the light of God shining in them will surely dispel the clouds and create an atmosphere of peace and goodwill. So let all of us raise our thoughts to the throne of the Most High and realize our spiritual

kinship with one another, thus establishing a foundation for world peace.

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The message of saints is today relegated to the background. It is they who have plumbed the depths of life and have found a solution to the complexities in it. They have dived to the very source of all things and beings. They speak from the experience of their identity with this source. Their words are pregnant with eternal truths. To follow them means to elevate, illuminate and divinise life. They teach how to live in amity and harmony with all people in the world. They prescribe disciplines for eradicating evil thoughts from the mind and fill it with pure and holy thoughts. They strive to take the soul to its goal—God of love, power, peace and wisdom. When the world recognises the greatness of saints and honours them, acting up to their words, it will enter upon a path of regeneration that will bring true freedom and prosperity to all beings. Instead of self-aggrandisement, the people will then be imbued with a spirit of self-sacrifice and will derive joy in giving rather than receiving, in helping rather than exploiting, in serving rather than domineering, in constructing rather than destroying.

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For all those who are struggling to be free from the clutches of misery, fear and despondency, produced by a disorderly or chaotic life, when difficulties and disappointments crowd round and poison the roots of life, there is only one way to find relief, and that is to take refuge in God. There is no saviour in the entire world more real than God. When everybody fails, God never fails. This fact is actually tested and proved in the lives of great souls, whose sheet-anchor was faith in God. When storms of passions rage enveloping you in their furious blasts and the world appears to you to be a hot-bed of burning coals, when failure and despair stare you in the face, one healing thought of God, His unbounded mercy and grace, can at once bring you tranquillity sunshine and cheer, and thereby transform your entire outlook upon the world and make your life blessed and glorious. So God is the great help. He is the one great refuge in all moments of crisis. This is true of the life of every individual and humanity as a whole.

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The only way to bring about peace in this world is for each one of us to realize peace in our own hearts. This is born of a union of our life with its source—God, who is the eternal, all pervading Spirit. This approach to the realization

of peace is known to everyone and we can, with assurance, declare that humanity is slowly progressing towards the attainment of this much longed for harmony and peace.

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Things on the surface may look dark and discouraging. The turmoil that is going on in the hearts of the majority of the people in the world indicates that the thirst for peace is turning their thoughts and emotions towards the supreme source of goodness, power, and joy—God. It is true to say that the natural evolution of the soul is always for reaching the sublime state of this pristine spiritual magnificence. What is needed is the intensification of our longing to reach the goal as early as possible. When we come to feel the presence of this supreme peace in us and everywhere about us, we shall be spreading the light of it far and wide, and creating an atmosphere suitable for the establishment of real unity and goodwill on earth. So let us pray with all love and devotion to the Divine for freeing ourselves from selfishness, pride and wrath, which are solely responsible for the present highly distracted and chaotic state of affairs in the world and for finding lasting happiness and tranquillity in the bosom of the Supreme Being.

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The inspiring songs composed by saints, when heard or sung, sink into the heart and relieve it of its burdens. They verily prove to be a soothing balm to the heart agitated with doubt, fear and sorrow. The sweet music combined with the healing message they convey, create harmony and peace. Mere reflection, or an attempt to understand and adjust our thoughts and feelings, do not help. We need a tonic to the soul and this tonic is provided by the sweet strains, imbued with spiritual light, coming from the ecstatic utterances of great souls when they were under the divine intoxication. The whirling mind is now bathed in a flood of divine joy leading it to the haven of the indwelling peace and equanimity. Life has to be turned to the eternal symphony of divine music that is always going on within us. The words of saints strung together in a harmonious rhythm dispel all darkness and bring in a state of divine illumination. The ecstasy resulting from this experience raises us to the level of consciousness in which we realize our absolute identity with all that exists resolving the diversity with which the soul is obsessed, into a unity which is, in itself, the Reality.

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Communion with God can be cultivated in silence and solitude. The eternal Beloved in our

hearts is ever waiting to raise us from the lower nature in which we are caught. What is required is that we should lift our gaze to Him, hand ourselves over to Him and permit Him to take us up and transform us into His likeness by infusing into us His radiance and joy. The moment our hearts are turned towards Him, we taste the sweetness of fellowship with Him. Thereafter our attachment to, and longing for, the objects that perish lose their hold on us, and when our communion with God becomes more and more intimate, we become entirely free from the shackles of the world. Our lives will then be divinely illumined and flow like a pure, sparkling, blissful stream. We will then talk, live and play with Him, and be active in all manner of ways in His closest company. Our vision gets now so thoroughly purified and universalized that we not only do feel His presence ever with us, but also behold Him everywhere as everybody and everything. In this exalted experience the ego-sense completely vanishes and we float on the Sea of Absolute Bliss and Peace perennially. Life now becomes a concentrated expression of the eternal Light and Joy. Love is now natural and spontaneous, saturating our every thought, feeling and act. Love now unifies, sanctifies and divinises every part of our being, converting us into a veritable embodiment of Divinity. The distinction of

God and devotee disappears. Now it is that the soul experiences a state in which itself, universe and God are one and the same.

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The crown of spiritual experience is the attainment of divine love—a love that overflows the bounds of all human calculations and standards and inundates all the worlds. This love is founded upon the highest realization of the Truth in all its aspects. It is imbued with wisdom eternal and a Vision that envelops everything that exists. No words can describe the sublime glory of this love. Saints are indeed embodiments of divine love. To serve and commune with them is to contact the eternal, to bask in Its radiance, to enjoy a bliss and peace which is simply ineffable. Where divine love is, there is immortal joy. Blessed is the soul that aspires to be a saint of this rare realization. The saint, who is a manifestation of God, showers his beneficence on all mankind.

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It is clearly seen that the world is now wide awake. It has found out that the goal of life is not the acquisition of the ephemeral objects, of the attainment of futile ambitions. The heart of the people is hungering for divine peace—the peace that can come only by the union of the soul

with God—the fountain of everlasting peace and bliss. “Seek and you shall find.” So the search for true peace and freedom should end in the realization of both. The aspiration which is rising in waves from the bosom of humanity should certainly meet the descending grace of the Divine for the transmutation of the earthly life into divine splendour, delight and peace. The crisis through which the world is passing is absolutely a needed factor in its evolution to the sublime destiny that awaits it. There is absolutely no reason for striking a note of despair or frustration. The world is safe in the hands of God who is leading it on to its goal.

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Just as a herd of sheep, scattered here and there, is frantically searching for water to quench its thirst, so human beings are seeking for a haven of enlightenment, relief and tranquillity. The waters of eternal life which the thirsting humanity long for are in their own hearts. It is these waters that quench the thirst and create contentment and security. To make this nectar available to everyone, there is only one easy way and that is to take complete refuge in God’s sweet and glorious Name. The power of God’s Name is infallible. It can destroy the veil that separates the soul from God. It can raise human consciousness to such

a height that the soul realizes that it is God itself. It takes the soul to a state of utmost magnificence in which God, soul, and world are resolved into one divine entity.

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Let us not look at things through dark glasses and be pessimistic. Reliance on God and His mercy and kindness is the stronghold of the man of faith. His outlook is pure and clear, for he sees goodness in all happenings and the ultimate triumph of truth over falsehood, love over hate and knowledge over ignorance. The world is a playground of God. It is He, as all forms of beings, playing this drama of life. It is He everywhere, as everybody. It is this vision that saves and redeems, that uplifts and enlightens. It is this vision that harmonises all conflicting forces and produces unity and peace. Fling away thoughts of depression, thoughts of dark forebodings and unreasonable fears and doubts! Stand up with a bright face and a brighter heart with the fullest consciousness that God does all things and He does so for the best of all!

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Through complete self-surrender, the mind becomes still, the ego-sense disappears, and the soul merges into the infinite silence of the Spirit. When this state is attained, a human being

becomes one with God, and all his actions flow out in pure spontaneity. The background and basis of his manifest life is then this supreme Spirit which animates, activates and illumines his entire life and its movements. Just as a variety of pictures with different kinds of gestures and movements appear on a white and spotless screen, leaving no impress upon it, and as the pictures cannot be exhibited without the screen as the background, so all the phenomena of the universal manifestation and its playful activity are seen on the screen of the silent and still spirit of the Divine. Therefore, it is rightly said that the universe is not a creation, but a projection from the divine and immortal Reality. The aim is to realize our identity with this immortal Spirit and its manifestations. It is now that we think, speak and act as the divine power wills, in the perfect freedom of the Soul. We enjoy a peace and joy which is simply ineffable. This is the goal.

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Equal vision is born of the experience of our union and oneness in Spirit with all beings and creatures and things in the world. It is this vision that make us love and serve all alike. It is now that we cannot but declare that all beings and things in the world are the very

forms and expressions of the divine spirit—God. This love and this sight are truly divine in nature. A saint who is gifted with these qualities sheds his grace upon all and by awakening them leads them on the path of Truth. The very look of the saint is charged with a great spiritual force. On a mind prepared to receive it, it acts like a flash on a glazed surface, or like a jet of fire on a drop of water. All the dross of the mind is burnt away in an instant and the soul is lost in the splendour, joy and peace of the indwelling Spirit. This is what is called the instantaneous act of Grace.

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When you have tasted the bliss of immortality, naturally all your desires for the sense objects disappear. Till then the mind will ever be in pursuit of ephemeral pleasures. When you have found within yourself the fountain of immortal joy, the attraction for the external objects and the craving to possess them no longer trouble you. This is real liberation—liberation from the bondage of the flesh and its desires. Therefore, to seek the Eternal, and enjoy the rare bliss and freedom which one gets by realizing It, are the *summum bonum* of life. All else is useless trash. To achieve this end, no sacrifice is too great. Then you become a light unto yourself and a light to

others. God's power and glory will be revealed in you. Your union with Him it is a constant experience, nay you are moulded into His very image.

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Adherence to the external forms of worship ceases when your mind is drawn inward. The object of all such worship is to achieve this aim. In meditation, your mind should think only of God who resides within you, and not wander about in the midst of passing scenes of the objective life. When you realise union with the Divine within you, you will have attained the fruit of all your Sadhana. The mind going inward through the practice of prayer and meditation finds the presence of the Divine first within, and then without, everywhere. You realise that you are the Spirit, not of local individual value, but of a universal nature and significance. You rise above all forms, thoughts and movements in which you had been involved when the mind was externalised. The inner perception and realisation of God is the culmination of all spiritual effort. Now you know who you are in reality. You are verily He!

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He who hates inflicts injury upon himself. It is like stabbing oneself. But love is a nectar

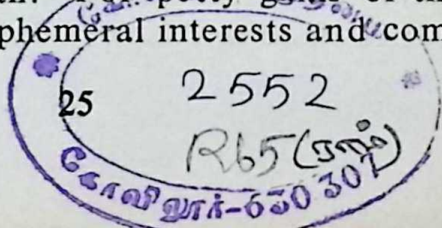
bath, a soothing balm to the heart. While the former creates pain and confusion, the latter brings joy and harmony. While hate wounds, love heals. Therefore love is rightly called divine. Love is the quality of God, and hate is the nature of a perverted and distorted mind. The life that is built upon love is a life imbued with spiritual radiance and happiness. In fact, love is the panacea for all the ills of life. Be the votary of love and make your life blessed!

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Lying has become so common in the world today that it is never considered a vice. The liar justifies himself by saying that he cannot get on without having recourse to lying. All seek the smooth and easy way that leads only to evil and distress. It is difficult, indeed, to be truthful at all times. But truth is the only way to attain real inner freedom and peace. The man of truth faces all trials and sufferings cheerfully for truth's sake. He keeps his conscience pure and clear. We have instances of great souls who have sacrificed their everything for the observance of truth. It is rightly said, "Truth is God". If you wish to know God, you cannot do so by following the way of falsehood. Truthfulness is the first quality needed on the divine path. For petty gains of the world, for the ephemeral interests and com-



forts of life, man abandons truth. The everlasting peace which we have to gain here and hereafter depends upon a life of rectitude, honesty and sincerity.

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Every one knows that if he wishes to be free from the clutches of the illusion, which the material world has imposed on him, he should, in the first place, control the mind which is swayed by various harmful passions and longings. It presupposes that the man given to gusts of anger has an unbalanced mind. The man who is given to fits of jealousy has a diseased mind. Again, a man who is possessed by greed and malice has his mind on a veritable fire. Therefore, it is well for him to turn his mental gaze within, where dwells the eternal God of perfect peace and bliss. When he attunes his soul with this supreme Spirit, he will be released from the hold of the base passions of his lower nature. When the mind is calm and tranquil, he will live a life surcharged with divine light and peace. A man has to live a true, good and righteous life, not merely for the reward he would get for it at a future period, or in some distant worlds after he departs this, but because he derives invaluable benefit here and now. This should not be for-

gotten. So, equanimity of mind achieved through self-control is an end in itself.

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How great and noble is human life when it is made to flow along the channel of useful, elevating and helpful activities! Life means service. Life's purpose is this and nothing else. We can serve by thought, word, and action. A thought of love and goodwill, that goes from us towards others, immensely helps. A kind and healing word uttered relieves a load of sorrow from the hearts of those who are in trouble. An active aid rendered to those who are beset with pains and afflictions is a source of incalculable solace. One who lives such a life is a true devotee and servant of God. The dedication of his life to Him has this aim and significance. He becomes really God's own in thought, word and deed. No philosophy can be worth anything if it points out a goal which conflicts with this ideal of service.

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Should divine love flower in your heart and spread its fragrance all round, the pride in you must be laid in the dust—pride of learning, wealth, material possessions, and fame. It is pride that sits like a heavy load on the otherwise free and illumined Self. Pride brings darkness where there is light and creates dis-

turbance and confusion in a life which would run smoothly and blissfully if it is free from the clutches of this malevolent force. It poisons the very spring of life and vitiates all its activities. So it is imperative that pride should go before the full consciousness of Divinity can dawn within you.

Therefore, you should constantly stay your mind on God's greatness and glory. God the omnipotent, who has brought into being the vast universe and all its beings, creatures and things, is one before whom an individual stands as a particle of dust before a huge and gigantic mountain or like a drop before the immeasurable vastness and depth of the ocean. Man's life is after all, a momentary flicker before the eternal pageant of divine splendour and fire. The more we attune our heart and mind to this all-pervading and imperishable Truth which is the basis of all existence, the nearer we come to realize the divine presence, until at last we are absorbed into His indescribable power, wisdom, joy and peace.

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Humility is a virtue which cannot be sufficiently extolled. The humble, the unassuming and the selfless alone are really happy and useful and therefore really blessed. Pride has been the downfall of great potentates, monarchs and dictators

of the world. Pride has crushed empires and kingdoms to pieces. We see in the history of humanity innumerable instances of men who, drunk with pride, caused widespread destruction and suffering to mankind. They have reaped bitter fruits of their wild lives here and will surely reap worse things hereafter.

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Our life on this earth is intended to reveal God within us—the God of love, compassion, kindness, wisdom, power and peace. What a magnificent status a human being gains when he realises the great God whose attributes are so sublime! Let our hearts be raised towards this supreme being in a spirit of utter adoration in which our individual sense is entirely sublimated: “O Lord, Thou art the sole Master of the worlds. To turn ourselves towards Thee means to invoke a veritable shower of peace and goodness on us all.”

When you sit silent and serene, all your senses at rest, in the awareness of your divine consciousness, you feel that you are not an individual tied down to the desires of the flesh, but a purified and enlightened being filled with a spiritual radiance which coalesces your life with God's. Now all the discordant notes and all the chaotic forces that are at work on the surface of nature

around you bear no significance to you. You soar and fly into the ethereal regions wherein you commune with God and attain to the knowledge of your identity with Him. Your life is a song whose harmonious vibrations seem to permeate, enliven and sanctify all that exists. You have crossed the border of mortality into the kingdom of immortality. You have achieved a position which has been yours from time immemorial—it has been truly your birthright.

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Kindness and forgiveness be your two watch-words. Let the heart melt before the sufferings of others. Let your life be placed at the altar of sacrifice for the relief of the distressed and uplift of the fallen. Else, life is a dirty pond that stagnates. The object of life is to give it away for the good of others. Else, life is not life, but death. Those who live for themselves are verily the living dead. Be therefore kind and serviceable to others. There is no limit to which you can forgive those who have wronged you. Forgiveness is eminently a divine virtue. The moment the forgiving nature enters into your life, depend upon it, God has revealed Himself in you. Believe not the man who says that he is an ardent devotee of God, if he does not possess a forgiving and kindly nature. Where true love is, there these qualities inevitably reside. God is love!

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The greatness of a man does not lie in his vast riches, exalted position, and name and fame, but in the qualities of his heart. If his heart is pure, free, forgiving, compassionate and humble, then he is really great. Such a one alone can be a true lover and servant of humanity. His one aspiration is to inflict the least pain upon others and to be the most fitting instrument in the work of relieving their distress. Man is what he is, according to his inborn or cultivated nature. Harshness, intolerance, and selfishness form the basis of the lives of some people, whereas kindness, tolerance and selflessness form the basis of some others. The former are responsible for creating strife and discord in the world while the latter bring in harmony and peace. All depends upon the choice which a man makes in respect of these two paths. The really great man is he who attains inner freedom and happiness and consequently makes others happy.

The object of human birth is to lead such a life. But the uncultured, unregulated and therefore impure mind makes a man a plaything in its hands and throws him into chaos. So the essential state to be achieved in the first instance in order to elevate, illumine and purify the mind, is to tune it with the eternal Truth residing in his heart. By such communion, he obtains invincible

spiritual strength by which he can put down all base, unworthy and degrading impulses of the mind and free it thoroughly from all its impurities and thereby transform his entire life to one of supreme utility and beneficence. Nothing worthwhile can be attained without drawing light and inspiration from God within us.

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It stands reiteration any number of times to say that a higher, a truer and a greater life should be founded upon absolute morality. There is no compromise between truth and untruth as between light and darkness. To realise God, one must be spotlessly pure. In the canvas of a perfectly crystal-like mind screen, God draws His own picture. It is in the clear and uncontaminated sky that the sun shines. So God reveals Himself in that heart in which there is not the least trace of impurity. Show of piety is not religion. It is not external signs of a holy life that makes one a holy man. Sanctimoniousness is hypocrisy. Sincerity, honesty and truthfulness are the virtues which a true devotee develops in order to see his great Beloved in his heart. Let us remember, God is our real goal in life. If we don't have Him, however much we may be belauded for our so-called goodness and cleverness by time-serving people, we will have achieved nothing. Great things can

be done by us only by His grace and all the credit and glory for them belong to Him alone. Man is merely a puppet and his life is so short on this earth! That he should pose to be an all-important personage is to forge more firmly the fetters of ignorance, and get deeper into the mire of misery. So forget not GOD.

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The world is indeed a stage on which we are all playing our parts as in a drama. God is the one holder of the strings by manipulating which He makes us dance to His will. He controls us from within. If we are only conscious of this truth, we would enjoy real happiness and freedom. If we are not conscious, then we invite self-inflicted pains and misery. After all, pleasure and pain are felt according to the state of the mind. When the mind is swimming in the ocean of infinite joy, that is, when it is attuned to the eternal God, we experience peace which no words can describe. So let us recognize the sovereignty of the Supreme Spirit over all beings, and eliminate our ego-sense and live in harmony with all peoples on the earth, and thereby be blessed.

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Dry philosophy does not help a spiritual aspirant in his quest of the Eternal. On the other

hand, it proves to be a great obstruction on the path. A life imbued with the sweetness of divine love and having a background of the realisation of the supreme Self, can alone grant the blessings of immortality, peace and joy. Laying too much emphasis only on the impersonal aspect of Truth, without accepting the personal or manifest aspect of it in active life, is the misleading method of some religious preachers. They bring forward the *mithya vada* or the 'illusion theory' so prominently that the ecstatic relation between a devotee and his God is considered to be inconceivable and unreal. God is at once impersonal and personal—spirit and matter—all-pervading Reality and also universal manifestation. 'Verily, everything is Brahman'. Whatever we behold is the very embodiment of God. In this vision lies the supreme achievement of a truly spiritualised life. It is an integral realisation in which nothing is denied, nothing is excluded, but everything comes within the infinite sweep of the Divine. Because, the Divine is the all-embracing, all-inclusive and all transcendent Truth.

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When you have gone beyond the three-fold qualities of nature and beyond the pairs of opposites through complete surrender to the

will of God, you can be perfectly tranquil, ever unaffected and unruffled even though moving and having your being in the midst of the world. Here your inner attitude to the external life is one of a witness—detached and dispassionate. You see before your vision a world panorama which you take in the light of a dramatic performance in which all beings and creatures are different actors playing their respective parts on the world stage. Hence the world has been described by the Seers as the Lila or play of God.

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What does one mean by living in the divine presence? God is defined as omnipresent which means that He is present everywhere in all beings and creatures and things. So He dwells within every one of us and permeates everything and every being around us. In fact, our real life is not different from His. To be ever conscious of this and to be ever basking in the sunshine of divine radiance and peace is to live in the presence of God. Indeed God is the soul of our soul, breath of our breath, the life of our life. To be absorbed in this consciousness and to be filled with the ecstasy born of our oneness with this Truth is to be an illumined image of divine love and peace.

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Pride and arrogance have landed many a life on the rocks. Whereas humility and tolerance have elevated a man's life and blessed it with success, peace and happiness. But God's ways are inscrutable. Whenever egotism and conceit raise their heads in the hearts of men, He does not take time in eradicating them from such persons by making them pass through bitter experiences. It is now that God is indeed gracious to them. A man who is entirely free from the ego-sense is the happiest man in the world. Because, he has found God—absolute existence, consciousness and bliss—in place of the ego. So leave aside pride and make way for the revelation of God within you. Let the darkness of egoism disappear so that the light of the Divine may shine forth in your heart. All the misery which a man suffers from is born of the ego-sense. Not knowing this, he unnecessarily suffers. Make God your aim and goal. Without Him life is tasteless and with Him life is sweet.

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Some preach that action is the goal. Some others say renunciation of action is the goal. A mysterious union of action and inaction is the real goal. Action by itself binds and causes misery. Non-action again by itself makes life

dry and insipid. In both the states there is the consciousness 'I am the doer' or 'I am not the doer'. This means the 'I' persists, which is the cause of bondage and verily the veil between the soul and God. Therefore the great teachers of the world, who have realised the perfect spiritual state, declare, "Surrender yourself to God and dissolve your ego-sense in His all-pervading and radiant existence and then live and act in the world, knowing yourself to be His child or servant." In fact it is by His power and will alone that we are able to do anything. All our physical and mental movements have their inception in the power of God. When such glorious surrender is attained, the exalted devotee at once acts and acts not. He lives in a state of perennial ecstasy—his spirit calm and serene within and the divine power active in his physical and mental being. Verily such a devotee is an embodiment of the divine Spirit and divine Power—a veritable child of God revealing all His splendour and greatness.

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A man may be learned in all the scriptures of the world; he may have performed Tapasya in solitude; he may have visited holy shrines and places of pilgrimage; he may have the gifts of oratory and possess miraculous powers,

but if he has no heart that feels compassion for the distressed, poverty-stricken and starving people, all these acquirements of his are worth nothing. When divine love, whose rays fall upon all beings alike on this earth, dawns in the heart of the devotee, he will have seen and realised God. He is really filled with the peace of God. He is in love with all beings and creatures of the world, because he sees that his Beloved has become all these. His vision is pure as crystal. He lives not for the pleasures of the world, but to serve. Such great souls are the salt of the earth. They are the real healers of the deep wounds that passions have inflicted in the heart of humanity.

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When you do a good turn to anybody, do not expect any return either in the shape of praise, recognition or material benefit. Let your service be done in a spirit of spontaneous love which is by itself a great balm to your heart and a source of unlimited joy and peace. Joy of service is lost when you expect any reward. This is the first step. The second step, the fulfilment of life's purpose in service, is that you are unconscious of having done any service to anybody while you are busy all the time relieving the pains and sorrows of people around

you. Service becomes your Dharma, that is your true nature, just as giving light is the Dharma of the sun. Sacrificing your life for the good of others becomes your supreme delight and joy. You exhibit a marvellous depth of patience, a spirit of never-failing forgiveness and a capacity to suffer to any extent for the sake of others—all done willingly and cheerfully. How true are the words 'work is its own reward'! This is exemplified in the life of a devotee who lives in the manner described above.

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A most harmful inequality is observed in the world. There are people who are rolling in riches and still hoarding more and more of it without using it for the relief of the needy and poverty-stricken people. There is on the other side a vast number of people subject to penury, disease and insufficiency of every kind. While a few are groaning under the weight of wealth, the vast majority is groaning under the weight of indigence and untold misery. This state of things is responsible for the confusion that we behold in human society everywhere on this earth. Equality established on the basis of love, co-operation, sympathy and goodwill indeed creates a veritable heaven upon earth. The man who freely uses all his resources for the relief of

his afflicted fellow-beings not only attains pure peace and joy for himself, but also by rendering relief to the sufferers brings them hope, cheer and peace. Thus all will be happy, living as they do with each other in brotherly fellowship and perfect harmony. Where there is unity, equality and co-operation, there all prosperity and happiness dwell. If we are to be true to God, true to the supreme Self within us, and true to our fellow beings, let us become instruments for fulfilling the Law of love and goodness, which has emanated from the Divine. As children of God, let us assemble, having love as the cementing force that will knit our hearts. together, and produce a world-consciousness of real peace.

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Mind united with God and hands at work in the world—such is the nature of a true devotee and servant of God. In this state pure selfless love flows out of him towards all beings, and whatever he does is always for the good of all. His actions bear the stamp of universal beneficence. He has no selfish ends to gain. He has no personal likes and dislikes. He has no cravings for name, fame, wealth and power. Some people may be pleased with him and some may not be. His life cannot be judged by

ordinary standards. He suffers and sacrifices to the utmost when called upon to do so for the good of humanity. Such a life is supremely blessed. Every one should keep this glorious ideal before him. Life's real purpose lies in attaining this. True freedom, joy and peace come to him who makes God and His service in the world his supreme goal.

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Death is common in the world. Every one in it must one day or other doff the physical part of him. Hence it is not at all proper to be afraid of it. Our main concern should be to spend the allotted span of our life in a righteous manner dedicating it to God and his service. While the body perishes, the Spirit is immortal. We are here to realize that we are the spirit. Body is only a vesture, a mask, or a vehicle, impermanent and transitory. The pleasures that we derive from the senses are illusory. To throw away a precious life, which should be utilized for attaining immortality, in pursuit of ephemeral pleasures, is nothing short of foolishness. Our aim is to attain freedom and happiness. Sense desires have kept us in bondage and happiness is far away from us. The fetters can be broken only by turning the mind to the indwelling God and through utter surrender

to Him. Everywhere we see people being puffed up with self-importance and strutting on the stage of the world and posing themselves to be leaders of others, criticising and condemning indiscriminately all who do not agree with their views. When the God of Death sends His strong breeze, these puny mortals are swept away, leaving no trace behind. Therefore, let us be humble and feel our own limitations as individuals. Let us lay ourselves at the feet of the supreme God so that His power, joy and peace may be revealed in us and we become His true children and servants.

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There is no greater thing in the world than love. This love can dawn in us and shed its light upon all only when the sky of our heart is perfectly clear of all the clouds of low passions and ambitions. Life without love is like a flower without scent, a tree barren of fruit, a tank without water and the sky without the sun. Men may be learned in various arts, sciences and even in spiritual truths and philosophies, but if their hearts are not enlivened with the nectar of love, all these attainments are worse than useless. It is not talk that counts, but life truly lived. Know that our victories are defeats if love is foiled. So love be our

guide! Love is the mother. Let us therefore be the votaries and children of love.

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World conditions are changing every day. What we consider as a most important problem today is no longer so a few days after. We see before us the wonderful world-film unreeling itself before our eyes; picture after picture, throwing every receding picture into oblivion. Behind this universal play there is the great changeless Truth which ever remains serene, calm and unaffected when all things in the manifestation appear and disappear in quick succession. That truth is the basis of our life and the world manifestation. When our life is attuned to Truth, we do not feel that we are mere creatures revolving like automatons in the whirling movements of nature and its creations around us. Truth is our being; Truth is joy and peace; Truth is wisdom and power; Truth is love and light; Truth is God!

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Sannyas is principally a state of internal detachment to the objects of the senses. The external garb is only a symbol of inner transformation. When the mind turns utterly towards the Divine and revels in His beauty, power and glory, it is then that the spiritual evolution of man

reaches its summit. This great goal can be attained also by total dedication of one's life and activities to Him. Here the path to be followed is Bhakti-Yoga, *i.e.*, union with God through devotion and self surrender. In the case of the Bhakta renunciation is internal and not external. His heart is ever attuned to God. God is all in all to him. The devotee lives only for His sake. His thought, work and action are completely saturated with love and devotion to Him.

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The formal Tyag or external renunciation is only a means to an end. After the aspirant has realised his oneness and identity with God as an impersonal, all-pervading and eternal Truth, he rises above this experience to the realm of Para Bhakti which grants him complete and all-comprehensive vision and realisation of God—both in His personal and impersonal aspects. He beholds the entire universe with all its beings and creatures as the manifestation of God. Verily, for him all beings and things appear as His embodiments. This exalted state is described by saints and sages as Vijnana. The nature of a devotee who has attained this beatific vision is that of a child. He is ever free, cheerful and loving shedding his grace upon all who come in contact with him. Verily, he is the very personification of divine knowledge, infinite love and immortal bliss.

So it is clear that Sannyas or Tyag is only a stepping stone to the realisation of a state of divine perfection in which all pairs of opposites disappear. Transcendence from all relative standards and conceptions of life is a necessary condition of that supreme achievement. Now, God reveals Himself in every part of his being—in all his thoughts, feelings and movements.

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If you earnestly wish to realise God you should employ every possible means to approach Him. All your activities should be in consonance with the fulfilment of this supreme ideal in your life. Read only such literature as would direct your steps towards Him. Hear only such talks as would raise your heart towards Him. Let all your actions be done with a view to expand your vision and accelerate your progress towards Him. Let your tongue always utter His sweet and glorious name so that you may feel your nearness to Him. Let your eye always behold Him in all forms and wherever it casts its looks. Let your thoughts enter into your heart and there visualise His beauteous form, presence and existence.

Reject everything from your mental and physical planes that prevent your attaining the supreme aim you have set before you. Rejection is mainly

a process of internal purification. A total and integral divinisation of every aspect of your being is a necessary condition for realising God in all His perfection. In short, your entire mind and soul should be saturated with one passion, one aspiration, one burning idea, namely, the longing for God. Just as a child separated from the mother feels the separation and when it is seized with the desire to behold her, to sit on her lap, to be clasped in her arms, its entire being is aflame with the longing to be with her, so also is the case with a true devotee or aspirant of God.

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It is absolutely necessary for us to achieve a strictly moral or ethical standard of life on which alone we can build the structure of a divine illumination and realisation. The first struggle through which the aspirant passes is the struggle for freeing himself from lust, wrath and greed which are solely responsible for keeping him tied down to his ignorant and degrading lower nature. He should develop mental, oral and physical purity. Hankering for sense delights should give place to intense desire for God who is the embodiment of pure love, power and joy. Complete conquest of lust is possible only when your mind, by being ever in tune with God, merges in Him, and you attain a perennial state of divine exaltation and

ecstasy. It is from lust that wrath and greed proceed. When you dwell in the Divine, your ego-sense having disappeared, you attain to a consciousness in which the notion of duality ceases to exist and the vision of the supreme oneness of all existence becomes your illuminating experience.

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People strive to attain God without making the necessary preparation for qualifying themselves to gain this supreme status. Therefore the struggle becomes a long, protracted and painful one, often terminating in a sense of despair and frustration. So the moral background is the essential factor for a life that seeks to approach and realise God.

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Where is God whom we are seeking? He is not far away from us in some region beyond our ken. God is ever near us, because He is within us. If you are a true seeker, then seek Him within you first, and then behold Him everywhere around you. God is the supreme deity of your heart which is His shrine or temple. To see Him you need a divine sight—a sight filled with the light of purity and equality. What God needs from you is whole hearted love and devotion for Him. Given these, you may depend upon it, instead of your seeking God, God will seek you out. For God

there is in Urdu a word "Khuda" which means "he who comes of his own accord". In the Upanishads, it is said God reveals Himself in that heart which He chooses, and so when He wills to meet you, He will come to you even sometimes without your invitation. But there must be waiting on your part with a longing heart and child-like anticipation. You should be like the kitten that cries and makes the mother-cat run to it.

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God is all mercy, love and compassion. Although He wants us, we do not want Him! But it is also rightly said, "Unless He plants in our hearts the seed of aspiration for Him, we cannot long to have Him and turn our back upon the ephemeral objects of life". Ultimately we have to come to the conclusion that everything is possible only by His grace. It is He who should grant us child-like simplicity and trusting nature so that by our being like a child, we can be blessed with His vision and realization.

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Whatever you do or do not do, bear Love in your heart—Love for all beings and creatures in the world. This is religion, for Love is God. Whatever your Sadhana and attainments in other directions may be, you have not attained anything, unless you have realized this Love. Your life must

burn like a flame of oblation at the altar of Love. If you are a sincere aspirant for immortality and wish to be blessed with absolute peace and bliss, then be a votary of Love. This Love is not circumscribed by any limitations, bound by any rules or regulations. It is as vast as space, embracing all beings alike. Its nature is universal. Therefore it is divine. Castes and creeds that divide mankind are antithesis of God—the Universal Love. Avaunt all that stands in the way of this supreme Love. All differences and distinctions should sink before the dawn of this eternal light. All barriers and boundaries must be broken so that you may be bathed in this cosmic power and glory of Love.

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When you are inwardly awakened to the knowledge of your Self, you become free from ego sense which is the cause of your and the world's misery. Think always in terms of humanity as a whole and not in terms of groups, communities and nations. God, the ultimate Reality, is seated equally in the hearts of all beings on this earth. It is by His power that all beings live, move and act. There is only one life and one power that informs and permeates the entire physical creation. When

you come to know this truth, your sense of superiority or inferiority vanishes. You feel one with all beings. Your body becomes then the body of everyone, your interest then is the interest of everyone in the world, nay, you know yourself to be all beings both in spirit and body. There is now no room for hatred, jealousy and greed—the offsprings of duality. You are merged in the radiance of unutterable peace.

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Bear all things patiently. In the face of the greatest calamity, keep yourself calm and serene. To those who misunderstand, revile and persecute you, return love and affection. Wish heartily that everyone who comes in touch with you should be happy. When you see pain and misery, let your heart rise in waves of sympathy and kindness towards them. Smile always in the face of your own troubles and difficulties. Submit to the divine will and be ever cheerful. Make God your strength, hope, refuge and joy. Live life like a moon-beam that rests upon sweet flowers only to keep them fresh and prevent them from fading early. Let your life flow like a shining stream, pure as crystal casting its radiance on all.

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Be humble and be great. In humility lies the greatest virtue. Let God be your Master. He is within you. Let all parts of your being submit to the behest of the Master. Your limbs move as He wills, your words flow as He wills and your thoughts inspired by His will. His power pervades you. Be conscious of this. Then you will be accepted by the Master and you will be blessed.

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If you want to enjoy real bliss and peace, you should cultivate entire and full devotion for God. Let God be your all in all. Your one and sole aim or ambition in life should be to realize Him. God wants you to be His simple, trusting and loving child. Worldly attainments like wealth, learning and position do not count at all. God looks at your heart. If he finds you sincere, guileless and pure, He becomes yours. If you are sympathetic to the distressed, kind towards all creatures, forgiving in your nature, patient and self-sacrificing, God bathes you in the radiance of His grace. In all humility approach Him in your heart, for there He dwells—the Master and Mother of your soul and life. Let your love for Him be such that your mind thinks only of Him even in the midst of your pre-occupations in the

world. True devotion for Him makes you pine for Him day and night. The slow fire caused by His separation burns in your heart like a steady flame. It consumes all impurities of the mind and makes you fit for His vision. Leave aside egoism. Make life sublime by illuminating it with divine light, peace and joy. Love all beings, for all are He—the be-all and end-all of your quest, the dearest to your heart, the eternal Truth—God.

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God's name is sweet. There is a way of repeating it that can give you joy and make you the very embodiment of joy. In the first place, surrender yourself to Him, accepting Him as the sole power pervading all life and causing all movements in the world. He is the Lord of the universe. Feel that you are nothing before Him. As an individual you are insignificant in comparison with Him. Know that you are nothing and He is everything. In this spirit, take His name. Call on Him and pray to Him with such an attitude and be sure that God whom you do not see within, will reveal Himself. His name is simply wonderful in its potency. It can purify, elevate and enlighten you thoroughly. Repeat the Name constantly with all faith. Do not use its

power for worldly ends. It is the key that opens the portals of heaven wherein God—absolute splendour, joy and peace—dwells. This heaven is in your own heart. His name also serves as the lamp that illumines the path leading to Him. Call upon Him as you call your mother. Let all the purest and deepest feelings of your heart be concentrated in the call. Few know the greatness of the Name. Sages and saints have sung of its glory in ecstatic words. If the world could only take to it, how free and blissful all beings in it would become! How all the difficult problems of life would be solved and peace and harmony established on this earth! May His name ring in the hearts of all! Let its sweet music charm the ears of all! Let it always remain on the tongues of all people and fill them with ecstasy!

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He is Truth and Life. He is the everlasting Principle—the basis of all manifestation, nay, manifestation itself. Because of Him everything exists. His all-pervading presence is responsible for the activities of all beings and creatures. He is pure Spirit. His nature is absolute peace. He is also the omnipotent light and power, expression of the Spirit,

appearing as all forms. He is infinite love and immortal joy. He is the very source of our existence. He is the great originator. It is by His will that we move and act. Know God as such and you will find that you as an individual, separate from your fellow beings, from the world and from the great Spirit that permeates all things, are unreal. You will then feel one with the ocean of divine existence—God, in all His aspects. You will attain freedom from bondage that made you all along a miserable being. God's power and glory alone are real. Recognize this truth and experience unalloyed peace and ecstasy. Your eyes will now be filled with the brilliance of God-vision and your heart with the luminous love that radiates and envelops all beings and creatures in the world.

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It cannot be sufficiently emphasised that a strictly moral life is the true foundation for the aspirant's spiritual progress and attainment. Sadhana consists in purifying the mind by freeing it from the clutches of lust, greed and wrath. Unless the mind becomes perfectly pure, the aspirant cannot hope to find God, within himself and everywhere outside. He cannot realize the supreme peace and freedom

which his being is hungering for. The most important achievement in the life of the Sadhaka is to eradicate from the mind the desire for sex-gratification. Indulgence in this low passion not only saps his physical energy, but also dissipates the powers of his mind by causing distraction and restlessness. Lust is the root of all evils to which the human being can be subjected to. The attitude of the Sadhaka towards woman should be that of mother or sister. He should see that he does not mingle freely with the other sex before he is established in the realization of God which has brought him the vision of Him in all human beings. Society of saints, solitude, engagements in selfless service, and constant communion with the Divine are essential methods by which he can keep his mind pure. So let the Sadhaka know that self-purification alone can entitle him to the vision and experience of the great Truth—God.

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If you would love all equally, you have to rise beyond like and dislike. Your love must flow towards all in even measure and your heart will then ever remain in tune with God who is infinite love. In fact, in your equal vision, this supreme love fills your heart and

overflows in floods spreading and embracing all living beings in the world. So long as individual-sense persists it is not possible to achieve this blessed state. Hence surrender to the will of the Divine and acceptance of yourself as only an instrument in His hands are absolutely necessary. It is surrender that releases the fountain of divine love and joy within you. Ego-sense hides the power and glory of God, who is the source of your life. Lay yourself at His feet, *i. e.* humble yourself before Him, recognising the truth that God is the almighty Ruler dwelling in the hearts of all beings and the Supreme Controller of the destinies of the universe. When you look upon Him as such, your ego-sense will naturally diminish and disappear just as darkness disappears at the rising of the sun. Then, your vision becomes equalised. As you become conscious of the divine presence in and out, everywhere, all beings, creatures and things stand revealed to you as the expression of the Divine. Love is then a spontaneous flow and normal function of your life.

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God's name is very sweet—sweeter than anything in the world. There is a general complaint of many aspirants that this glorious

Name has not been giving them the sweetness which saints have found in chanting it. There are certain conditions to be fulfilled before you can know its nectarine taste. Know in the first place that God is eternal peace and bliss and He and His name are not different. Then humble yourself before Him and take His name with all faith, love and devotion. Court the company of saints. In their presence your ego-sense is greatly subdued and there you take His name. Then you will certainly feel that the Divine Name is the giver of pure joy. Or, go into solitude when the company of a saint is not possible, and pray to God, the universal and super-universal Power and Truth, in all humility, and chant His name. Sing His name in chorus in a similar attitude in congregation. Your mind will then be filled with a rare bliss and peace derived from the Name. When you once get the taste of His name and find that it is capable of making the mind still, calm and serene and of revealing the joy of the Divine, it will take possession of the mind, which will be drawn towards it irresistibly. Who would not have the Name always with him when he has once experienced that it has proved to be the great joy and solace of his life? So, chant

the Name with all your heart and it will lead you to the highest spiritual experience.

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There should be discipline in the life of every individual in order to achieve either moral or spiritual development. In the case of children and young folk in their teens, discipline from outside does help a great deal in their adjustment of life to the environment and generally with the world. But even in their case, a pedagogic enforcement of rules and regulations without rightly studying and understanding their nature, instead of becoming a help, suppresses and distorts their natural growth and evolution. In the case of adults the outside help consists in awakening the individual to a moral or spiritual life and by hints and suggestions enabling him or her to find out for himself or herself the method and conduct of life by adopting which he or she can attain moral or spiritual perfection. Cut and dry rules applicable for all individuals and dominating insistence of a so-called higher authority on the individual for casting him into a new mould as it were, for producing a superman, is not at all the way.

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The life of the individual must grow like a bud into a flower and the flower into a fruit. As we provide the necessary conditions and environments for the growth and fruitions of the bud into a fruit, so also is it with life. In the life of the adult spiritual aspirant, the best discipline for his advancement and ultimate realization is self-imposed discipline. Here imitation and abject, implicit obedience to the law set by anyone, however highly evolved he may be, will, instead of bringing into being an illumined individual, only produce a human robot without initiative, all its inner powers and beauty unexpressed and unrevealed. The keen aspiration for attaining the highest Truth must be there. Contact with a divinely illumined personality must also be there. But the unfolding of the hidden divine life and truth in the Sadhaka must take place according to the nature and qualities of his inner and outer life and being. We know that we cannot hasten the ripening of a raw fruit and if we, by any process, cause it to ripen artificially and prematurely, the taste of the fruit will never be the same as that of the one which has ripened in the natural course. Saints are therefore called the "awakeners" whose grace works on the Sadhaka like the

sunlight on the lotus bud which blossoms into a fragrant and beautiful flower.

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Unless the ego-sense disappears the divine life in us can never reveal itself in all its glory. Be like a child, and the power, charm and sweetness of the Divine will radiate through you like the lustre of a gem. God should possess you, not in any one part of your being, but in every atom, gross and subtle, of your entire physical, mental and vital being. You will become now a very image of a supernatural essence made up of infinite love, power and joy. You behold all beings, creatures, and things in the world as your own reflections, nay, yourself manifest as all those forms as though you are looking at yourself in a mirror. This consciousness of divine unity and oneness of all existence is the *summum bonum* of a real divinised life which has attained the zenith of spiritual perfection.

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Just as the growth of the fruit in the flower causes the petals of the flower to fall off as the fruit grows, so also when the Divine within us chooses to manifest Himself by a gradual or rapid process, the ego and its associated

desires leave us until they disappear completely. It is then that the Divine enters into, envelops and occupies every part of our being converting us into His very embodiment. This supreme consummation is possible of attainment by every human being. What is needed is a total all round dedication of our life to the Divine so that our will, thought and feeling be imbued with divine radiance, having no purpose but to express His power, beauty and glory.

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If we rightly understand life and the world around us, we will surely know that we are placed by God in a field or sphere where we are given the fullest opportunity for striving to throw off the animal and even the human mask and manifest our true divine life and existence. Verily all the forces of nature, within and without, are contributing towards our reaching this supreme goal. Only we have to rightly view and accept the dispensation of God in all that happens to us in the invisible inner sheaths of our being and the visible and outer manifestation around us. Disharmony and discord with the world is due to our failing to attune ourselves with the all-pervading Spirit inherent in all living beings and creatures. When our life is universalised,

when the one all-pervading Truth is realized, when the plane of duality is dissolved and a state of absolute unity and nonduality is achieved, then it is that we will have known the secret of this life. Otherwise life is a mystery and we flounder through it without understanding what we are, where we are and what we have to achieve by it. The more we are in harmony with the universal life, the more free and happy we are. Life becomes restless and miserable when it is in conflict with nature and the life-current that courses through it and the absolute Truth that dwells in the depths of it. Attunement both in the physical and spiritual planes is essential for a complete spiritualisation of life.

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Love is the one dominating power which should rule us through all our mental and physical movements. Just as sap is to the plant so love is to our life. It is not that love is not within us; it is not that love does not influence our lives; but we are unconscious of these processes. When we are unaware of its existence in us, we are like the tree in which the sap is dried up. Life becomes insipid, crude, harsh and self-centred and most unhappy. When this life-force—love—freely

plays in our mental and physical being, its nature being infinite and divine, we come to see all beings and creatures as near to our heart as the very blood that runs in it. When love rules us, all distempers, passions and ambitions leave us entirely. Love energises, sweetens and enlightens our life. All the latent glories of the divine Spirit within us stand revealed in all their magnificence. We swim in an unending sea of joy. So let love possess us and transform us. Let love be our God—God that reigns in the hearts of all beings; the love that has become the entire universe; the love, the infinite Spirit, that fills the worlds and transcends them all. All glory to this love!

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Life's fulfilment lies in the realization of the Divine. God is the only Reality and He has become everything in the world. So long as you feel separate from Him, you are living in ignorance which is the cause of misery and bondage. The supreme freedom and peace—the quest of life—can be attained only when this sense of separation from Him disappears. It is by the redeeming power of His grace that this ego-illusion that makes the individual think that he is a unit living and acting by

himself, having only a physical relationship with the world, is dispelled. God is, indeed, the truth of his being. God is the soul of the universe. The universe is His manifestation. Therefore, your life is to be ever attuned to Him who is in and out and everywhere. The chief condition for the attainment of this goal is absolute elimination of the ego-sense by the invincible power of His grace.

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Saints are great awakeners. Their contact arouses the sleeping soul shrouded in darkness. In their presence you experience a strange peace and stillness which makes you aware of the Divinity within you. The first taste of the Eternal constitutes a great turning point in your life. Thereafter you are drawn more and more to the divine centre of your being. The attachment to the ephemeral objects of life is transformed. The light that has dawned in your heart guides and leads you on to the fullest comprehension and experience of your identity with the Divine, both unmanifest and manifest.

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Saints are like mothers. You gain strength and courage through their kindness and love. If you are sincere at heart and trust them; they

keep the light within you burning with undiminished brilliance all through your difficult journey on the divine path. So, court the company of saints.

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It is when you are dead to the lower self and all its desires that you rise to a consciousness which is One and all in all. Let your life be controlled and directed to this great purpose. Let the sense-desires be completely subdued. Really, on the ashes of these desires is built the Life Divine. Let your heart be turned to the Divine, completely. God is the sum total of all existence. Merge yourself in Him and rise superior to the cravings of the flesh. Eradicate your 'I'ness and enjoy supreme peace, felicity and freedom. Do not any longer be deluded by the will-o'-the-wisp of the pleasures of the senses. Seek eternal happiness!

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God is your great Master and Helper. Place yourself in His hands and He will see to it that you are illumined within and without, endowed with the knowledge, vision and experience of the Divine Life. By renouncing the life of the senses you will come by a state in

which you will be purified, elevated and filled with infinite peace and joy.

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The purpose of human life is to live in a state of perfect freedom—freedom from the clutches of the lower animal nature. Life of the senses is life in diversity. When the soul rises above the desires of the senses, you realize unity, because you know that you are the Universal Spirit. Now love becomes the keynote of your life. While the former is born of selfishness, the latter is born of selflessness. Love is universal. Therefore love is selfless. The test of true inner purity lies in this universality of vision. In this vision it is that life finds its fulfilment which, in its turn, brings immortal peace and happiness.

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When the false conventions and ostentatious observances are broken through, the soul is liberated. For realizing the Truth no external paraphernalia is necessary. No garb, no sign, no cult and no creed can help you. The day will come when you have to leave all these behind, and go to meet the Eternal in the perfect nakedness of your Spirit, shedding all make-believe forms, customs and traditions. Simplicity, spontaneity and humility become the guiding principles of

your life. You move freely with all. You love all alike. You break all boundaries set by the calculating and selfish human mind. You soar like a free bird in the infinite expanse of the spiritual firmament. You look upon all beings and creatures as the embodiment of the one divine all-prevading Spirit. Temples, Ashrams, mosques, churches, synagogues, Viharas, etc., cannot imprison your soul. You find your soul's delight and joy at all places - in the best as well as the worst.

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This equality of vision and free mingling of lives drawn from different communities, castes, creed and nationalities are clearly seen when you are in the midst of a group of children. They love one another, play with one another, eat, sleep and move with one another without regard to any distinction. This is how nature, the great Mother, wants us to live with each other. But the grown up, wise and civilized man, so-called, is a proud and intolerant creature full of conceit and self-importance. He is over-conscious of his separative existence as an unique individual—a victim in the trap of his own creation. He has lost the child-like freedom—the equal vision—the pure and spontaneous expression of love towards everyone. He has become an aggressive, domineering and

unsympathetic being. So, recover your child-nature
 Let go your sense of importance; come into the
 open and breathe the fresh air and look upon all
 beings on the earth as your brethren. Break
 down all demarcating walls that prevent the free
 movement of your soul; seek release in Eternity
 and, living in Eternity, become the Eternal! Give
 up all fear, hate, wrath and lust. Realize your
 union and oneness with the supreme one who
 resides in the hearts of all beings and creatures.
 God is in you and you are His form. Both as
 formless truth and as form, you are verily He!

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It must be understood that to find God and
 realize His presence and feel one with Him, is
 not to achieve anything which is outside your
 normal life and nature. You are essentially one
 with Him. Your soul and He are not different.
 Only you have to dispel the dark cloud of
 ignorance which envelops it, hiding your intrinsic,
 radiant and eternal being. Ignorance makes you
 identify yourself with the body and your entire
 life is centred in and utilised for the satisfaction
 of your senses—the offspring of your lower nature.
 Therefore, rise up and declare that you are the
 immortal Spirit full of power, bliss and peace.
 You are the embodiment of divine splendour,
 knowledge and force. Shake off the clouds and

stand revealed as you are, the sweetest consummation of the transcendent truth and the illumined higher nature—the very incarnation of Divinity.

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Love is the light of the Eternal. It sheds its rays on all alike, because it beholds itself everywhere. Love is unity. True love is fragrance produced by the fusion of a soul with another soul. Such a love has no boundaries. It extends and covers everything that exists. It enters into and enlivens, vitalises and animates, without let or hindrance, all objects in the universe. Verily, it is the life-sap of the entire visible manifestation of the Divine. Such is the nature of the love that emanates from our heart. It is the ego-sense that prevents your recognizing, appreciating and enjoying in fullness the beauty, grandeur and power of this love. The egotism blurs or tints the vision, distorting it and setting false limitations on it, destroying its supreme spiritual effect and significance. Be the votary of this love. Let all your movements be the movements of this love. Let your love embrace all beings and things in its infinite grasp and purview. It is now that your life becomes blessed and you realize the bliss and freedom of immortality.

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Dream about God and serve in His world. This is your task here. Let your thoughts, words and deeds be offered to Him as expressions of your service to humanity which is nothing but His manifestation. Service be the motto of your life—service not for petty pelf, not for name and fame, not for your own low satisfactions, but service for the spontaneous joy which it yields you. Service done with pure sympathy and love is its own reward, for it brings you instantaneously, unalloyed happiness. God is bliss and peace. Your thoughts are to be in tune with Him and all that proceeds from you through words and acts must flow from this great source of joy, bearing its stamp. Verily, the manifest life has come from the unmanifest. How degrading are the pursuits after the pleasures of the flesh, compared to the lofty, pure and luminous joy that you get when you identify yourself with the Divine and live in the world as the vehicle through whom His blissful energy flows in an unbroken stream!

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A Sadhaka's progress on the spiritual path is distinctly marked by a moral elevation. As his mind stays more and more on God, the grip of the lower desires of the flesh slackens day by day. Hitherto the senses were keeping him in captivity,

his sole ambition being to satisfy them, So, naturally, his life ran along the path of unrighteousness. To have frequent recourse to deceit and untruthfulness has been habitual with him. Now, an approach to the Divinity within him, through a burning aspiration, brings about an entire change of heart. He develops a noble, truthful, honest and generous nature. All the low practices for gaining momentary sense-enjoyments are totally given up, since he strives to be ever in communion with the Divine. He becomes loving, kind and compassionate. He gives himself away in all respects for the good of others. He sacrifices cheerfully all his pleasures and comforts for the service of those who are in pain and distress. Lust and wrath have no place in his life. His intellect is illumined and his vision is universalised. His heart flows in streams of love towards all beings and creatures in the world. In short, his whole life is dedicated to God in the world and beyond.

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Prayer is a means of communicating with the eternal Being. In the early stages, when a sincere devotee longs for God, he prays to Him to grant him His vision, as also the constant awareness of His presence. His heart aspires to be united with Him and ever remain in unbroken contact

with the realization of Him. When, through such a prayer, he attunes his life with God and finds Him within and without, and his entire being is saturated with His love and light, all his actions pour out of him as a spontaneous offering to Him. Then his prayers cease. He lives and acts as the Divine bids. He has no will of his own; no choice of his own; no thought, word, or deed of his own. His life in all aspects is inspired and guided by the Divine within him. All his sense perceptions are imbued with divine power and purpose. Absolute freedom from the ego-consciousness is the keynote of his life. The devotee now becomes the very image of love and joy. He beholds his Beloved's will working in all turns, changes and events in his life and the world-life. His submission to the Divine is so complete that there is nothing left for him to pray for or achieve. This is the zenith of supreme peace, joy and contentment to which a devotee reaches when he fully realises God in all His perfection.

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A man in his ego-centric attitude sits in judgement on others' conduct and ways, while, in himself, he has innumerable defects and frailties which need to be scrutinised and eradicated. It has been the habit with people to ignore their

own weakness and see the same in others magnified as through a microscope. Introspection and direct examination of his own heart are essential for a man who wishes to make himself pure and thereby prepare himself for obtaining eternal peace and happiness which his soul thirsts for. It is rightly said, 'judge not lest ye be judged.' Let the torch of criticism aimed at others be directed against oneself. Let the pride with which one is obsessed, be laid in the dust. Let him know where he stands, what he is, what his inner cravings are, what is the disease that has seized his soul, what are the impurities lurking in his mind, what is the great obstacle that stands between him and the immortal bliss and peace, and what are the bonds that keep him tied down to the low levels of life and prevent him from soaring into the heaven of his real life and being—the eternal Truth. When he has thus, by deep reflection, discovered what he is, he can through prayer, self-discipline, company of great souls, and acts of love and compassion, get rid of all impediments, mental obsessions, nay, darkness, that envelops his soul, and realize the splendour power, peace and joy of the great Truth that dwells within him.

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KOVILUR MADALAYAN
 ANDAVAR MANDRAM
 KOVILUR B O
 (VIA) MANAGER
 RAMANATHAPURAM DIST

Concentration precedes meditation, and perfect stillness of the mind follows meditation. For developing concentration, various methods are employed. Of these, the practice of fixing the mind on any form of God's many Avatars, or on the sound of His name, is the easiest way for one who is on the path of Bhakti. Any form or name of the Lord, or both, which you hold dear as your Ishta, may be taken up for practice.

You usually start with a picture or an image of the Lord before you, and fixing your gaze upon it, take this object as a symbol of the Almighty Truth. After a period, the form to which you are devoted, your Ishta, gets, so to say, stamped on the mind; and then you can mentally concentrate upon that. Side by side, you can also repeat His name by the tongue. When you adopt mere repetition as a means for concentration, you have to assume that the sound of the Name is itself a symbol of God. By gradual practice, the external repetition will lead to an automatic repetition of the Name in the mind. When, thus, either the form or the name comes into the mind constantly, you will attain concentration.

By this Sadhana you will be able to curb the restless nature of the mind. Without this

preparatory process, meditation becomes impossible. Meditation means making the mind dwell upon the attributes of the Lord, as described in the Gita, namely, that He is eternal, all pervading almighty, absolute freedom, peace, wisdom, love and bliss.

Then, a stage will be reached when all the waves of mind will cease, and it will be bathed in the stillness of the transcendent Reality within yourself. The object of meditation is to merge your individual sense and existence in the universal light and vision of God. You will, then as a result of your Sadhana, rise above the body-idea and realize the omnipresence of God.

The above are a few hints on concentration and meditation. What is needed for a sadhaka is earnestness, perseverance and steadiness of purpose. The path is difficult for one who is lukewarm about it, but it is easy for one who is really sincere and resolute.

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Karma Yoga is a difficult path. But, by pursuing this path we can attain to the supreme blessedness of life, namely, the realization of God. By dedicating all our actions to God, we make our life utterly divine, both internally and externally. We become great instruments in the

hands of God, by seeing and serving Him in humanity, in a selfless spirit.

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Sri Krishna is the immortal Lord of our hearts. He blesses us with His divine vision, when we have surrendered ourselves completely to Him. Total surrender denotes the awareness of our entire dependence upon Him alone, coupled with the consciousness that He, from within us, activates us in every way. When we are on this path of self-surrender, we have to think constantly of His greatness and glory, and become united with the Lord, enjoying in such a union a bliss and peace 'which passeth understanding.' It is in this state that the veil of ignorance that shrouds our soul is thrown off. Not only do we behold the Divine revealed to us, within and without, but we also find ourselves absorbed in His ineffable splendour.

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Four kinds of Sadhana are prescribed, which will help the spiritual aspirant in his or her progress towards the goal. They are:—(1) Society of saintly souls; (2) Constant repetition of the divine name; (3) Study of the Bhagavad Gita or other scriptures; (4) Steady meditation on the divine attributes. If Satsang cannot be had,

sitting alone for repetition and meditation may be employed as a substitute. During meditation, the Sadhaka must sit erect in an easy Asana, and with eyes closed, mentally repeat the name for sometime, and then bring into the mind the exalted attributes of God. In the beginning, the mind may wander away from the object of meditation, but by practice the Sadhaka can achieve the sublimation of the lower self into the Higher Self, and thus be blessed with the divine sight that sees Him alone everywhere.

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One who is pure in thought, word and deed is, indeed, a happy man. One who is not pure is really unhappy. How can we become pure? Only by thinking of God. 'As the man thinketh, so he becometh'. Think of God, and you become God. Think of the world, and you become the world. Always think of God who is absolute peace, purity and bliss. Then you will enjoy Bliss.

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Sage is a Seer and saint is a God-lover. Both are equally great in their respective unique attainments. Sage has seen and realized God. Saint having realized God, still loves Him as his Beloved while the one knows, lives and teaches, the other

knows, loves and serves. From sages came great scriptures like the Upanishads. From saints came devotional treasures like Srimad Bhagavata and Ramayana. Both saints and sages strive in their own way to lead humanity to the supreme goal—God.

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It is perfectly true that the society of saints is an invaluable help to the spiritual aspirant. Ever and anon, he should court that society, and by implicit faith push forward his Sadhana. He should not think that by indulging in the enjoyment of the senses he will be able to attain satiety. Enjoyment means increase of desire. He must be aware that the mind filled with the remembrance of God finds hardly any time to think of sense objects. One-pointed devotion to God and total consecration of his entire life to Him alone would take the aspirant to the highest Truth.

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The path is not easy, but there is joy even in struggling to attain the goal. When you go for a marriage celebration, where you expect lot of merriment, going itself will be joy to you, however difficult the way to reach it may be. So you must bear cheerfully all the troubles of the journey because, at the destination, you will meet

with supreme joy. God is supreme Bliss. When you strive to meet Him, let it be a cheerful struggle. If you do so, in the struggle itself you will taste the joy of attainment. Therefore it is said, 'Make the end the means and the means the end.' On the path you may meet with many obstructions but face them without a sense of frustration. The joy of aspiration will leaven your endeavour, however hard, with patience and cheerfulness.

Part II

HINTS TO ASPIRANTS

PART II

Sadhana means discipline for the control of the mind. Through a ceaseless process of concentration and meditation you have to fix your thought on the supreme Reality dwelling within you. A wavering and restless mind cannot achieve anything. The mind, like a stream, should continuously flow towards the Divine. For this a keen and unquenchable thirst to realize God must be present in the heart of the Sadhaka.

The nature of the mind which makes it run towards the objects of the senses must be thoroughly subjugated. A controlled and purified mind alone can attain to the knowledge of the Divine. What is needed is steady discipline for subduing waves of desires that agitate the mind. Of course, a complete eradication of desire is not possible when the Sadhaka is still on the path.¹ The total extinction of desire

for worldly enjoyments comes when the light of God shines in the controlled mind.

The easy path for the subdual of the sensual desires is not their suppression, but the diversion of the mind from sense objects towards God by developing an unusually strong attraction and longing for Him. The more your mind gets attuned with God, the weaker becomes your craving for the sense objects. For freedom from attachments, a most efficacious means is a recourse from time to time to solitude. The renunciation that is required of the Sadhaka is the renunciation principally of the attachments existing in the mind.

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Do not think that Self-realization is a matter for one person to give to another. The very term Self-realization signifies that each one should discover and experience the Self for himself or for herself. The plant, although it may require sunshine for its growth, would grow up only by its inherent strength, aspiration and vitality. All the needed strength is within yourself for reaching the goal of perfection. The grace of saints is like the light of the sun for the plant; and that is ever pouring on you. Keep up this consciousness and grow into the likeness of your immortal Being.

You should not concern yourself too keenly with the question as to what time you would take to be able to reach the goal. To tell you the truth, you are eternally at the goal at every moment of your life. The attainment consists merely in your realizing or becoming conscious of this fact.

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You have to avoid the society of those people in the world who are immersed in the pleasures of the senses and do not believe in a divine existence. Avoidance here signifies not to have any intimate relations with such people. You have to be kind and tolerant towards them. That does not mean that you should permit yourself to be influenced by them. A feeling of superiority is, indeed, a real impediment in the progress towards the attainment of the ideal of equal vision. Ultimately, you have to develop a consciousness of divine presence at all times and in the company of all kinds of people.

Too much intimacy with any person, whether he be so-called good or bad, is not desirable. Put on the armour of constant thought of God and move fearlessly in the midst of any kind of society, maintaining all the time a perfectly balanced and equal state of mind.

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If you wish to attain the goal of life, viz., God-realization, it is absolutely necessary that you should possess a calm and tranquil mind. The mind will be calm and tranquil only when you have cultivated sufficient strength to keep it under control; and control is the outcome of a steady self-discipline. Therefore, spend at least an hour early in the morning and in the evening exclusively for meditation on the immortal Truth that dwells within you.

You are also aware that the Name of God is all-powerful. He who takes the Name constantly will have his mind perfectly under control. Do not plead the excuse that you are too busy or worried to take the Name of the Lord. If you really desire to be free from the unpleasant situations that face you in the world, it is imperative that you should, at whatever cost, spend some time in the thought and contemplation of God. You fall into moods of dejection and depression only because you are not in touch with God. You will have the courage to face all trials in life unperturbed, only when you know how to take complete refuge in God. There is no other saviour in the world than the Almighty Lord, and therefore trust Him with all your heart and He will surely protect you in every way. Above all, take His name constantly; and this

will grant you a consciousness of perfect security and peace.

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When thought and emotion are harmonized in the contemplation and love of God, the lower human nature is transmuted into higher divine nature, which will lead you to the experience of divine ecstasy even when you are active in the world. It is the combination of wisdom and love that produces this result. Tune your thought with your immutable and all pervading eternal Swarup and realize that all the movements of your dynamic nature are the spontaneous expression of that basic Reality. The path is constant remembrance, meditation and surrender of all your actions to the Divine.

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Be persistent and persevering; never give up the struggle until you reach the goal. But remember one thing, let not the struggle be a source of anxiety or worry to you. Walk on the path of self-discipline with a heart filled with faith and cheer, enthusiasm and courage. It is indeed no small joy even to put up a stiff fight against all the powers of darkness that stand in the way of self-realization. The power that will help you on and the grace that does keep you up are ever in you and with you.

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The difficulty about concentrating the mind on the Divine Name is true of all Sadhakas who are on the spiritual path. In the earlier stages you may feel it is almost impossible to control the restless nature of the mind. What is needed here is a persevering effort and a spirit of dauntless strength and abiding hope. You can, whenever despair faces you, remind yourself of the saints and sages such as Dhruva, Prahalad, Narad, Gnandev, Tukaram and others, who, by a persistent endeavour, succeeded in making the thought of God run in a continuous stream in their minds, through the ceaseless repetition of the Divine Name. What was possible for them is possible in the case of every one of us. Of course, a stiff and unyielding struggle with the mind is inevitable; but there is no room for dejection and despair. When this very question of the control of the mind was put to Sri Krishna by Arjuna, His reply was: "The mind can be brought under subjection by means of Abhyasa and Vairagya", *i.e.*, through constant practice and detachment of the mind from the thought of external objects.

Ramdas can assure you that if you continue taking the Divine Name with a determined purpose, knowing the full power and signi-

ficance of it, you are bound to attain perfect concentration. You must sit in an undistrubed place and practise mental repetition of the Name and also, side by side, meditate upon the glorious attributes of God, with the firm faith that He resides within you. Ultimately, by this process of concentration and meditation, cultivate a mental state in which there is perfect calmness and silence. The experience will enable you to rise above the body consciousness, and will grant you the realization that you are the supreme Truth pervading all the worlds.

Above all, develop the attitude of perfect self-surrender to the Almighty Power that controls your inner and outer activities, and all those of the entire universe. Put yourself totally into the hands of God and, by such dedication, derive the needed strength and courage to walk on this difficult path of God-realization, facing bravely all the obstacles that beset it. Patience and singleness of purpose are absolutely necessary for the Sadhaka. In all that you do, feel that you are guided and controlled by the Divine Power within you.

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Suffering has come to man through sheer ignorance. Each one suffers for his or her own

faults. God is, indeed, all mercy and kindness, because it is found that he who takes refuge in Him enjoys eternal joy and peace, whatever his external circumstances may be. The only mystery that the poor intellect of man cannot understand is the mystery of ignorance. He cannot answer the question why there should be ignorance at all. Even this question has been solved, though the solution may not satisfy all. In the vision of the absolute Reality, the world is looked upon as the Lila of the Lord in which the various changing states, to which all creatures are subjected, merely belong to the passing cosmic play. Whatever that be, ours is to feel for the suffering humanity and serve all with the strength that God has granted us.

Do not be upset by the adverse happenings in the family or in the world. With full faith in the Almighty, take all worldly things for what they are worth, and do not grieve over the inevitable. Misfortune and adversity are invaluable aids to spiritual progress. There is only One who is deathless, and identity with Him alone grants us real freedom and happiness. That is our Antaratma, the Lord seated in our hearts. Look upon all things and events in the light of this Atman, and not in

the changing light of Maya. Turn your thoughts more and more towards God, and patiently bearing all the trials which fall to your lot remain in perfect peace, taking refuge at the feet of the Almighty. Wonderful indeed is the Lila of the Lord! His ways are inscrutable. But we have to see good alone in all that He does. An unvanquishable optimism, even when beset with the greatest misfortune, is a sign of perfect faith in the merciful, benevolent and all-loving nature of God.

Sufferings are the common lot of mankind, but the real hero is he who offers a bold front to them and utilizes them for realizing the mysterious purpose of this life, which is the acquisition of divine knowledge or spiritual illumination. Do not be cowed down by sufferings. Feel that they have a place in your life as much as anything else for which you aspire. Trials and difficulties frighten us only because we look upon them with fear and distress at heart. Accept them as they come and, by a constant thought of God, overcome them. When you thus control yourself and remain unaffected by them, you will have gained no ordinary strength and courage. All your circumstances will then mould themselves for your good.

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Those who want to reach God must break off all bonds born of the sense of 'I' and 'mine'. The feeling that you are an Indian, as distinct from any other national, is itself a sort of false Abhiman, or egoism. It is called national consciousness; it creates the wrong feeling that this country is 'mine' and that country 'is not mine'. A Bhakta or devotee of God, whose vision is universal, can never harbour such narrow ideas. He develops universal consciousness and loves all alike, irrespective of caste, creed or nationality. Whether people are Indians, Americans, Europeans, Japanese, Chinese or Russians, Ramdas sees only Ram in all of them and loves them all alike. God has given Ramdas the right to say boldly that the whole universe is his. What a joy it is to love all, all alike!

The mother loves her child and feels happy. When love of even one child gives joy, how great must be the joy if one accepts the whole universe as one's own and loves all alike? To look upon all as our own is called a Sarvatma Drishti, or universal vision. It is like jumping from the small well of family and friends to the vast ocean of universal existence. Universal vision is the mark of God-realization. There is in it absolutely no selfishness, no

sense of separateness, no sense of 'I' and 'mine'. Love limited to a small circle is Moha. Love for all is known as Prema. Moha, based on attachment to the body, is a source of bondage, whereas Prema, based on Sarvatma Drishti, is a sign of freedom.

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Some people think that Jnana, as distinct from Bhakti, is the goal of spiritual progress and there is nothing beyond it. To enjoy real bliss and sweetness, however, they should have Bhakti also. Some dry Jnanis find it difficult to face trying situations in this world. They are calm and happy so long as they do not come into contact with the outside world. But they lose their equanimity and feel disturbed under unpleasant circumstances. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's Guru, Totapuri, was once eloquently talking to Ramakrishna, sitting near the sacred fire, about Brahma-Jnana; that Brahman alone was real, that everything was Brahman and so on. A servant came there and took a burning coal from the fire. At this Totapuri got wild and started abusing the servant for his sacrilegious act. Sri Ramakrishna burst out laughing at this. When asked by Totapuri for the reason, Sri Ramakrishna replied, "It was only just now

you were saying that all is Brahman. Why do you then abuse the servant? Is he also not Brahman?" Totapuri, who had not reached Ramakrishna's stage of Para-bhakti, at once admitted his mistake.

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A Sadhu once came to Anandashrm. In his talks, he was telling Ramdas that he was seeing everything as Ram and that Ram alone was playing this world Lila. One day the Sadhu went out placing his Kamandal, near his Asan. An Ashramite saw the Kamandal and took it to see how nicely it was painted. The Sadhu meanwhile returned and saw the Ashramite handling his Kamandal. Immediately he flared up at the latter, heaping on him all sorts of abuses. Ramdas came to know of this, but kept quiet for the time being. In the evening, the Sadhu came to Ramdas, sat before him and started massaging his legs. Ramdas asked the Sadhu as to what happened that afternoon. He replied, "That dirty fellow came and took my Kamandal, polluting it by his touch. How did he dare touch it?" At this Ramdas asked the Sadhu, "Was it not Ram who took your Kamandal? You have been telling Ramdas that you see everybody as Ram. Why did you abuse your Ram?" "That fellow is dirty,"

the Sadhu continued, "he belongs to a low caste. How could I tolerate his touching my Kamandal?" The Sadhu's seeing Ram everywhere was only tall talk. He who acts as he talks is the one who is really worthy of worship.

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The existence of God is a matter of intuitional experience. The knowledge of God cannot be gained by a mere belief in what others say of Him, or by the mere acceptance of Him as a result of a superficial view of life and its implications.

With Ramdas, God is not a chimera, a mere conception, or a thing of imagination, or blind belief. For him, God is a solid reality, capable of being intimately known and realized. Ramdas would not wish that anybody should simply take his word and acknowledge, without one's own inner conviction, the existence of a supreme Reality who is the Master of the universe and who works out all things for absolute good. Ramdas' task is to awaken the heart of man to the sense of this great Truth, and make him realize Him by the proper utilization of every bit of experience he goes through in life.

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Varied are the experiences of man; and they may be divided into two classes—pleasant and unpleasant. The pleasures and pains we meet with in this life are born of our contact and association with the ever-fluctuating external objects of existence. The man who is involved in the surface phenomena of life is mainly a creature caught up in the constantly changing emotions of life. So long as he chooses only to taste the evanescent delights of the objective life, and does not care to strive earnestly to think and meditate on the real, changeless and eternal Spirit of his being, he cannot but be like an animal sacrificed at the altar of the ever-recurring pains, sorrows, fears and anxieties—the offspring of darkness and ignorance. So long as man permits himself to be thus sacrificed, false ideals of life would lure him and he would ever be in pursuit of them. He would then be deceived into thinking that certain ideal external conditions, as conceived by him, would grant him the peace and happiness which he is in search of.

We have heard of the man who ran to meet the horizon. Such is the case of a man of the world. So long as a man thinks that his happiness depends upon external circumstances of life, even if he becomes the monarch

of the world, he will be as far away from peace and happiness as ever. He should go within and there find true peace and happiness. As he contemplates on the Divine--the supreme source of his being—he approaches a state where there is no darkness, turmoil and misery where pure and heavenly joy await him. There he is lost in the sea of supernal tranquility. The struggling soul has at last reached the haven of rest, relief and freedom.

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We are ever living in the ocean of Sat-chit-ananda. Bliss is ever within and without us. It is all-pervading. Even when it is all Bliss within, without and around us, it is indeed mysterious that we should be unhappy. The fish that always remains in water still feels thirsty. So also we are unhappy though ever remaining in the ocean of Sat-chit-ananda.

How can this happen? How are we to realize that it is pure Bliss, within and without? So long as the fish cuts straight through water, without inclining to one side or the other, its mouth remains closed and water does not find entry into it. If it has to take water inside, it must slightly turn to one side, when the mouth opens and water enters. Similarly, so long as

we assume a stiff unbending attitude, obsessed with Abhiman or ego-sense which obstructs the passage into our heart, we shut ourselves from the inner and outer all-pervading Bliss around us. The moment we are humble and bend, surrendering ourselves to God, the Abhiman is destroyed and our heart is opened to the inflow and outflow of divine peace and joy. Now we realize that our real nature is Sat-chit-ananda.

So feel always, "I am nothing, O Lord! You are everything"! See what joy you will get by getting rid of the ego-sense. Absolute surrender is necessary to unlock the gates of Bliss within you. Know that everything happens by God's will. To think, 'I am doing this; I am so and so; this is mine', is all ignorance. Still we cling to these false ideas and suffer consequently. What a glorious thing it is to surrender entirely in the hands of God and be His child!

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Our ego-sense is false. If we try to find out where the ego lies within us, we will come to know that such a thing does not exist at all. When we try to find out the seed of an onion and go on peeling it layer after layer, we discover, ultimately, that there are only layers

and no seed within. Similar is the case with our Abhiman or ego-sense. When we try to find it out, we realize that it does not exist at all!

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Some aspirants think that the vision of God with form is the end of all Sadhana. Others think that unless and until they see God everywhere, live, move and have their being in God, without any break whatsoever, they have not attained the highest.

You should first know clearly what is God-realization and then how it is to be attained. Experience in the world shows that when you want to gain any object, you have to strive hard and work properly till you get it. As you are striving to achieve your object, your thoughts will be naturally dwelling constantly on what you want to achieve. Thus remembrance and effort are the two fundamental things necessary for gaining anything. The same holds good in the spiritual field. To attain God-realization, constant remembrance of God as well as proper Sadhana are necessary.

The path to God is not an easy one. You have to make your mind and intellect absolutely pure. Purity is the bed-rock of

spirituality. If you are not free from the six evils of Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada and Matsarya, you will not get God-vision. To be free from these evils, the best method is to remember God constantly and chant His Name. By such ceaseless remembrance, all the Vasanas of the mind which bind you to the world, causing misery, are gradually destroyed and the once restless mind is made calm. Then it is able to stay longer and longer in God with one-pointed devotion for Him.

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You forget everything else when you are fully absorbed in any work. Similarly, if your mind is entirely fixed on God, desire for sense-pleasures and the objects of the world drop off by themselves. God cannot be realized through material possession. Anything that is gained through the sense is momentary and perishable. Only if the mind is directed towards the Imperishable and made to stay there, will it cease to turn to perishable objects.

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Those who remember God always are bound to attain Him. By spiritual Sadhana, the mind and the intellect are purified and the ego-sense disappears. Once the ego-sense is

dead, you feel you are nothing and God is everything. You realize that whatever was done by you was by the power of God, and that even the Sadhana you did was done by God's grace, nay, by God Himself through you. You feel you are a mere instrument in His hands. Now your surrender to Him is complete and He takes you up higher and higher on the spiritual path.

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God is not far away from us. He is nearer to us than anything else. He is within our own heart. We have forgotten Him with the result that we are subject to all sorts of sufferings. To free ourselves from misery we have to think of Him constantly. Then our mind will become pure and our lives will be blessed.

Keep this ideal always before you and carry on your activities with unbroken remembrance of God. Then you will become free from lust, greed and wrath, pure in thought, word and deed. If we live in the world forgetting God, we shall be unhappy ourselves and make others also unhappy.

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God has given us human birth not to lead the life of animals. He has given us also the power of discrimination. By discrimination

we have to go beyond these lower pleasures and dedicate our life to God. Liberation is possible only through the human body; and to waste this life in pursuit of sense-pleasures, instead of trying to reach God, is indeed pitiable.

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Surrender to God is the way to liberation. Constant repetition of His holy name will lead us to self-surrender. Repeat the Name—Rama, Krishna, Siva, Allah, or Christ. God's name is like a lamp kept on the doorway. It gives light both inside and outside the room. So also by keeping God's name always on our tongue, we shall have peace within and without. It removes all the impurities of the mind and enables us to see God everywhere. By realizing that everything is the form of God, we shall also be able to love all alike.

This is the path for the realization of God. Many go to forests to do penance there for the purification of the mind. When the impurities of the mind are completely destroyed, then one is ready for God-vision. When the mind is pure, it becomes absorbed in God. You realise His presence within you. You also

see Him without, everywhere. Whatever you see, is now seen as the form of God. The whole universe is seen as the Lord's form. God and God alone exists.

The sense of duality vanishes completely once you realize your identity with Him. You and He become one. The drop becomes one with the ocean. As long as you have the sense of duality, you are subject to Raga and Dwesha, likes and dislikes, and the mind gets disturbed, making you miserable. To enjoy eternal peace and bliss you must go beyond all dualities. You must see the One behind the many. The One remains as One and is also simultaneously seen as the many. As One, He is the changeless, formless spirit; as many, He is the whole universe.

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Struggle is the sure condition of progress. Without struggle you cannot achieve anything. Do not be downhearted. Face your so-called unfavourable circumstances with a brave heart, and come out victorious through it all. You have always with you your strongest aid and support, namely, the Lord's all-powerful name. The Name will not allow you to sink. By virtue of the Name, you can conquer all the inner and outer difficulties of life.

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Do not blame Karma, or anybody else, for what you are. You can undo what has been done, through the exercise of a firm and determined will. Determined will is yours when you tune your will with the will of the Almighty; in other words, when you surrender your will to God.

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Do not seek to transform the atmosphere around you, but strive to purify and illumine your own vision towards the external life and surroundings. Your domestic field is not bereft of God's presence. Divinity resides in all beings and creatures around you, to the same extent and degree as it does in you. The change should be principally in your own outlook on life. So, it is a transformation to be effected within, not without. Give up all longings of the mind, except one that aims at knowing and realizing your immortal, ever-blissful and real Existence. Depend upon God in all things, and hand yourself over to Him unreservedly, and rest content. He does all things for the best.

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True and selfless love ever flows from a pure heart in waves of joy. To awaken this love, the Lord's name is the means. Keep His name always on your tongue, and in your thoughts, during

leisure hours. Then cares, worries and doubts would not dare approach you. Submit in all things to His will. He determines all our affairs for good.

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Be ever brave and cheerful. Bear your cross nobly. "Be a hero in the strife." Life is a strife for all; but great is he who, possessing a clear vision, faces all circumstances of life with a bold front—God within and God overhead.

Indeed, there is nothing so glorious and sublime as the pure and selfless love of the devotee for the supreme Lord dwelling in his heart and manifest also as the universe. Ramdas bows down before the splendour of the divine Love that dazzles the hearts of the devotee. He has dedicated himself at the shrine of this Love. His God is this infinite Love. It is this Love that protects, feeds and takes every care of the humblest and the poorest in the world. What the world despises, persecutes and oppresses, this God-Love adores, uplifts and saves. May Love ever prevail! May it ever shed its light on all!

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Every awakened man or woman knows that the object of life is to realize God. Now what does 'realizing God' mean? God is not a far away

being with whom we have to get united and experience the liberation and peace by such union. God is in fact, the truth of our very existence. We are the Truth itself—God Himself.

In other words, we can say we have to realize the Self. Self, God and Truth are one and the same. To be aware of what we are in reality is the aim of life. As it is, men and women feel that they are merely individuals, made up of a bundle of sensations and bodies composed of five elements. This is not the truth. We are all manifestations of the one Truth, the one Reality which is eternal, all-pervading, changeless, ever-illuminated, whose nature is pure bliss and peace.

How to know that we are this Truth? The simple method is to constantly think and remember that we are this Truth and by so doing dispel the illusion which makes us believe that we are only the perishable, manifested beings or bodies. Remembrance connotes removal of forgetfulness. Forgetfulness—which makes us wrongly think we are what we are not—should be removed by remembering what we actually are. The thought-waves that are responsible for the obliviousness of our true being and nature have to be quelled. Truly, they must disappear or dissolve in order that we may achieve a state of perfect inner serenity, stillness and peace.

Once the mind ceases to be restless, being free from thoughts and desires, that moment we are not individuals, but Pure Consciousness which is at once cosmic and supra-cosmic in nature. Stillness of the mind awakens in us a consciousness which is full of radiance and ecstasy. Now we know that we are the Truth—the Eternal.

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To tune our mind to one thought, to the exclusion of all others, in order to ultimately dissolve even this one thought, the chanting of God's name is the way. The sound of God's name is so fascinating to the mind that it gets itself easily concentrated on it, and ultimately losing itself in a superconscious existence, disappears into it producing the needed inner spiritual illumination.

All our thoughts, words and activities should conform to the realization of God, *i. e.*, the expansion of our little self, so that it may merge in the universal consciousness and life. It is a process of sublimation in which the individuality gradually vanishes and ultimately we stand revealed as the very embodiment of the all-prevading and immortal Divine.

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Let us question ourselves – What are we here for? What is the aim and purpose of this existence? What has our experience so far been teaching us?

We are, after all, mere bubbles in the vast limitless ocean of changeless, everlasting existence which is the only Truth. These bubbles appear and disappear and what importance and truth can there be in this passing phenomenon? Know, once for all, that one absolute, immortal existence is the only Reality. All else is unreal. Death and birth are mere shadows. Should we flee the substance in the pursuit of the mere shadow? To grieve over anything here is folly, knowing, as we do, that everything here is apparent and must vanish away.

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Sri Krishna in the Gita says: “What is born is bound to die; what dies is bound to be born; therefore, over the inevitable, do not grieve.” In fact, this means, birth and death have nothing to do with the infinite Life. So, submission to the divine will is the only way. Let us stand upright and assert the Godhead within us. Let us stand unshaken by the storms of delusion and realize the immortal peace and bliss that we are.

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Let us not be despondent. Let the Prarabdha of the body work itself out in this life, so that, if God wills that we should be re-born, we may be free then from the effects of any residual Prarabdha and have a glorious life. Ram-mantra will surely give us all strength to put up with the pains of the body.

Cheer up! Cheer up! The case of every one of us is entirely in the hands of God. His will be done! Death and birth are only passing phases in the journey of the soul to Immortality.

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There is no evil outside you. In reality there is no evil at all. The external enemies, so-called, the evils you see outside, are, in fact, projections from your own mind. On the face of it, this may seem to you to be not only an astounding proposition, but also a very hard one to accept. Still that is the truth. Nobody is conspiring against you except the uncontrolled passions within your own heart. You yourselves are responsible for what you are—happy or miserable. You yourselves make or mar your lives. Still you are busy blaming and finding fault with everybody in the world for your sufferings. You fail to probe within and remove the seed of discontent which is in your mind. You should turn your

vision inwards, and by watching the working of your own heart, remove the evils lurking there.

If you closely examine with the necessary depth of thought, all the experiences you have gone through so far in life, you would inevitably come to the conclusion that your environment has not been the cause of the peace or happiness you have enjoyed during certain moments or periods of it. The same environment which appears to have yielded peace at one time, appears to have caused dissatisfaction at another, and vice versa.

Where then lies this subtle seed of discontent? You will admit this poisonous seed is nowhere else but in your own mind. So long as the mind seeks to derive happiness from external sources—from one's possessions and one's achievements—Ramdas can definitely assert, from the fullness of experience which God has granted him, that it can never know what true and lasting happiness is.

It is not our external conditions that are responsible for our misery or happiness, but our own state of mind which must always be kept independent of them. This can be done only by making the mind dwell for ever upon God, in whom we must take complete refuge.

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If we pray to Him for sources of worldly happiness, like riches, comfort and greatness, or even the pleasures of heaven, we ask only for perishable things that inevitably end in pain and care and sorrow for ourselves. We cannot then escape the everwhirling cycle of births and deaths. The highest gifts or boon that we have to beg of God to grant us is His grace. Grace gives us Jnan, which alone can free us from misery.

What is the Jnan or knowledge that we get by His grace? It is perfect, one-pointed, concentrated devotion to Him and the resulting contentment, peace and bliss in all conditions. If we attain this Jnan, then, when this body perishes, we directly merge in Him, never to return any more to this world of change, pain and death. That is the goal we have to live for. That is the goal we have to attain.

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Real independence is spiritual. It is the inner freedom from fear and sorrow. This is attainable only by knowledge of the eternal by realization of the universal divine Spirit. Ignorance is the cause of all bondage. Man's forgetfulness of his true divine nature is the cause of ignorance and sorrow. Ignorance makes him identify himself wrongly with his body and crave

for ephemeral things of the world. Knowledge alone can make him free and happy.

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There is no greater victory than the victory of the Spirit. The real hero is he who has mastered the mind. Conquest of the mind is possible only by awareness of the great Truth, the immortal divine Spirit that pervades all existence. That is the master-key to get lasting success and happiness. All troubles in the world have their roots in mental chaos resulting from ignorance of the real nature and purpose of life.

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Mankind today is in the clutches of false aims and aspirations which deny spiritual values. It holds that material advancement, achieved by any means, can lead to happiness and human welfare. There can be no end of troubles for man so long as he clings to such mistaken ideas and fails to attune his life to the life Divine. Realization of equality founded on the spiritual kinship of all beings, must form the real basis for all human relationship among individuals and nations. Selfishness and greed must be rooted out and the heart purged of base ambitions for material wealth, power and fame at the expense of others.

Till then there can be no peace and happiness for man.

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We shall be celebrating our triumphs in the wrong way if we fail to search our hearts on such occasions for the purpose of self-purification and do not remind ourselves of life's supreme goal, which is the realization of Self or God. We should embrace the ideal of universality and cease to think in terms of separation, or isolation of individuals, communities, castes, creeds and nations. We should stop exploiting our fellow-beings in any manner and learn to live in tune with the Divine.

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Drive away from your mind the notion that you cannot realize God while living in the world. God, whom you seek, dwells in the hearts of all creatures and beings. If you ignore this truth and renounce the world, you may be renouncing God Himself.

The proper thing to do is to spiritualise all your activities by a complete surrender to the all-pervading Master and Lord of your and the world's being. Take it that all the actions you are engaged in are performed through the divine Shakti, which works by the will of the supreme Godhead. Believe that you are merely an instru-

ment in the hands of God, and that He has appointed you to the task with which you are at present occupied.

Complete and unqualified resignation to the will of God in all your work is the path that leads you to the knowledge of the Atman or inner Self. Realize that all your actions are the spontaneous expressions of the Divine within you. Be bold and fearless. The infinite power of the Lord to guide and lead you on is ever with you. By constant remembrance of God and meditation, draw strength from this unfailing supreme source.

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It is said that good cometh out of evil. This is perfectly true. Every circumstance in life, when viewed from the right angle, proves to be for good. We appreciate the true value of life only when we have tasted the bitterness of the experiences which beset it. Difficulties and worries are the common lot of mankind. The true hero is he who has imbibed from them the great lesson that life is granted to us for a noble and high purpose, namely, the realization of our immortal nature, which is pure freedom and peace. So, you have to take it that the dark moments that have come to you are really necessary and useful.

This view leads to the supreme knowledge that there is no evil in the world. That is to say, it grants us the knowledge of the supreme Good, which is God. Let us not forget the truth that all the events and happenings in this world have their inception in God, who is guiding and controlling them in His inscrutable ways. Hence submission to God's will and its workings could alone yield us real peace and contentment which are our quest.

Such a total submission becomes possible only by continuous remembrance of God. Sustained remembrance enables us to become conscious of our union with Him and leads to the dissolution of the false ego-sense which is responsible for misery and discontent in the world.

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God is within you; and you are His expression. God alone is. This is the whole truth.

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Do all things by the will of God, the supreme Mother and Master. This Master and Mother, who is also the Master and Mother of all living beings in the world, is ever dwelling in the hearts of us all. He is eternally residing in you and is pervading everything around you. Be conscious of this always by continuously taking His holy

name. Don't seek for God outside yourself, forgetting His existence within you. Don't cling to external forms for gaining spiritual progress and peace.

When you throw the entire responsibility of your life on God, you are free and blissful, just as a child is under the care of its mother. Man, in his false wisdom, thinks that he is very clever, and sits in judgment upon man and God. But when he comes by situations in which he has to drink bitter doses of despair, disappointment and loss, he realizes how small he is, and how great is the power of God.

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Man often exults over the defeat of another forgetting that, some other time, his own defeat will be the cause of jubilation for others. So, humility, in all conditions of life, is the way to enjoy peace. When ruled by his lower nature, man is an animal full of pride and vanity. Suffering alone brings him down, and makes him recognize the truth that vanity is the cause of his misery. Do not forget that the man rises today, falls tomorrow. Keep always that state of mind in which there is neither the sense of rise nor of fall in you.

As you love your fellow-beings and are of help and service to them, you bring yourself nearer to God within you. Your meditations become fruitful by leading such a life. Attunement of your soul with God through prayer and communion alone can grant you everlasting peace. Ultimately you have to know that you and He are one and the world is His manifestation.

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Your vision should be universalised through the realization of the one all-pervading, eternal spirit and life. You have to think, feel and act in the terms of the universal. In other words, God-thought should so continuously engage your mind that your life should be fully imbued with His power, radiance, love and joy.

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God is within you. This is the central truth from which you have to start for knowing and realizing Him. You should feel that you are ever living and moving in His being and be aware of His presence with you always. You should make your mind still, silent through contemplation and surrender. The ego should disappear totally. It is then

that the mind becomes perfectly tranquil and you rise above the physical consciousness into a divine consciousness in which your sense of separation from Him is lost. Now you know you and He are one.

In the absolute oneness of all existence, all diversity dissolves. In this exalted attainment you live in perennial divine ecstasy. You become verily the embodiment of the Divine and you are supremely blessed.

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The source of all troubles is in the mind; there is nothing wrong outside. So control your mind by constantly taking God's name. Then all those who seem to be trying to make you miserable will be most favourable to you. Nobody will dislike you if your heart is pure. Instead of fighting with people around you, better fight with your own mind. The best way this could be done is by using the weapon of Ramnam, and you are bound to triumph.

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It is not giving up of anything external that matters in our approach to God. What is needed is a whole-hearted devotion to Him, remaining in the condition in which He has placed us. Our heart must be with Him and

our actions performed in a spirit of dedication.

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Compassion towards the poor, expressing itself in acts of relief to them, constitutes service of God Himself. Here we should be actuated by pure and selfless love. Love is its own fulfilment. Love flows out in selfless service. Love is the redeemer and saviour of the human soul. The love spoken of here is the purest emotion that rises in our heart, a ray of the Divine which spreads out and becomes, as it grows, the universal radiance, the very splendour of God. How beautiful our life turns when it is imbued with this love and light! The bliss and peace we strive to attain can be had only by the grace of the Divine, when He awakens within us this sweetest emotion—Love.

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Being a Christian, you are a great lover of Christ. If you strictly follow Christ's teachings, you can realize the greatness of the divine Father of whom He speaks so often in His Gospel. He also tells you that God, the Father, dwells within you. So what you have to do is to accept Christ as your supreme guide who leads you, through communion with Him,

into that realm within you, in which God resides—God the all-pervading, universal Truth and Spirit.

Christ is the manifestation or incarnation of God. So to remember Christ and surrender yourself to Him means realization of the universal consciousness of God.

So your way is to attune your life with Christ's life. Prayer, meditation and communion with Him are essential for attaining Christ-consciousness. Christ's words should ring in your ears: "Blessed is he who is pure in heart, because he shall see God."

To know Christ in His supreme glory, you have to surrender your will to His will. Become His true servant by loving and serving mankind. He is most pleased when you serve your brethren who are in distress. He says love is the one great virtue you have to cultivate so that love can inspire you in all your actions.

You know the potency of God's name. The name 'Jesus' has wonderful power in it. If you constantly keep the Name on your lips you will find that Jesus mysteriously takes hold of your life and moulds it into a fitting vehicle

for His grace to enter and illumine it.

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For all people there is only one way of approach to God. They must have pure devotion to God and should perform good action. Bhakti and karma go together. For you, to start with, repetition of God's name is the way. Have God's name continuously on your tongue. Lead a pure and truthful life. Be kind and compassionate to those who are in distress. Read the Bhagavad Gita daily.

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The ego is hard to conquer. The whole of our struggle is to do away with it. Surrender is the only way. Our personal struggle goes for nothing. It is His grace that should make all things easy for us. We fret, fume and grumble when our effort proves futile. Instead of this attitude, it would be well to humble ourselves to the dust and take His name and feel always that He is the sole doer. Verily, by His will alone all things happen. Take refuge in him, make Him your all in all, surrender your entire being to Him, and He will reveal Himself within you and fill every fibre of your being with His radiance, peace and joy.

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Constant remembrance of God and complete surrender to Him will enable one to attain perfect purity of mind. It is freedom from lust that grants one inner strength and peace. A life dedicated to the service of humanity is true life. For such service it is absolutely necessary that one should possess perfect purity and self-control. Whenever you achieve anything great, be always humble. All power and glory belongs to God.

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There are various ways of serving God. You can offer your learning, wealth and body at His service. He is in the hearts of all beings and creatures. Whenever you get an opportunity to serve the suffering, the sick or helpless, serve them with all humility and love; then you really serve Him. Never think that you are a big man and that you are gracious enough to extend your help to others. This attitude will not save you. But, whenever you get a chance to serve, be grateful to God for having provided you with such an opportunity. Though this is a small message, if you act upon it, you will surely attain God-consciousness.

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Do not think that life in the world is not compatible with devotion to God. Activity is the very nature of life. Take it that God Himself has set you to the work you are doing now. Live move and do all things, with your thought resting on God. Have the consciousness that the Divine Ruler of the worlds is guiding and watching over you.

Before going to bed at night, and when rising from it in the morning, send a prayer to God to keep you always in His all-blissful refuge. Perform your daily duties, whatever their nature, in the best of lights possible. Don't have misgivings. Have courage and enthusiasm; and ward off all cares and anxieties.

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Great things are done always in the teeth of opposition. Resistance gives an impetus to progress. This is true in all affairs of life, when obstacles are met and overcome with a firm faith in God. The inception of our Ashram, and the service rendered so far through it to the world, present a glorious example of the above truth.

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That God is the friend of the helpless, is repeatedly proved in this world of change,

by many an example. The sweetness and peace of a true life is possible only when we accept all the conditions and situations in which we find ourselves, as determined by our all-loving almighty Mother. Life in its external form is often a struggle and a battle. To possess a hero's heart and fight without flinching is to enjoy life and to triumph over it.

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Faith and practice combined can enable an aspirant to overcome any and every difficulty that confronts him on his path and gain perfect control over himself. Surely, the grace of a saint is essential. Under his guidance and influence the Sadhaka progresses rapidly towards the goal. But one's own effort and struggle are also essential. Tamasic inactivity is an obstacle to progress as much as any feverish, Rajasic activity. One-pointed remembrance of God is conducive to concentration and the ultimate attainment.

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Your life is in your own hands. So elevate it, purify it and fill it with the bliss of Immortality. May God who is within you be your guide!

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Cheerfulness is an antidote for both mental and physical maladies. Raise your spirit by elevating your thought to the remembrance of God within you. It is no good depending upon another for the needed guidance and solace in times of difficulty and depression. One should look within for guidance. One ought to have recourse to independent means, which is the contemplation of God. That will give you light and make you forget the trials of life at once.

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To get over the difficult situations in which we find ourselves, what is required is faith in the power and in the influence for good of the indwelling spirit of God. Do believe in the benevolent nature of this supreme Power. Habituate your mind to the contemplation of Him. Then all your perplexing problems will at once dissolve and disappear.

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Worry is the cause of most of the distempers of the mind and the body. Remove worry by steadfast faith in and constant thought of God. Leave your life in His hands, and give up all anxieties about it. Regulate your life in such a manner that you can devote more and more time to the remembrance of

God through Bhajan, repetition of God's name, and meditation on His great attributes. Don't be dejected. God, who is the Almighty, is your help. And be sure that he who trusts Him never comes to grief. Go on repeating the all-powerful divine Ram Mantra, "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram", whenever you are free from other work. Depend upon it, the divine Name can save you from all troubles.

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You are not really weak and helpless. All strength and power are within you. God-vision is yours the very instant you will for it, with concentration. Why don't you? Simply because you do not choose to. Ramdas is here giving expression to a truth gathered from the depths of his experience. Complete trust in and submission to God's will, under all circumstances, means the vision of truth, the vision of the root-principle of all creation. The words "If God wills" mean only, "If you arouse and assert your real, inner, all-powerful divine will". The solution therefore is to awaken the inherent power of your soul. You are verily the immortal Truth—the great, deathless and changeless Reality. Victory be ever yours!

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It is an established truth that we cannot please the world and God at the same time, and that the path of Truth is as narrow as the razor's edge. Ramdas knows from experience that when he gave up all considerations relating to the world and struggled to walk on the path of Truth, he was assailed on all sides by biting criticism and persistent persecution. But these gratuitous attacks, instead of putting a check on his progress, accelerated his pace towards the goal. The more we are reviled and disowned by the world, when we stand for God and God alone, the nearer we approach Him who is the only real Beloved of our heart. Tests come to us in various ways. Ours is to be unshaken in our adamant purpose, and march onwards with a spirit of heroic adventure.

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The world is a world after all; and we have to take it for what it is worth. We have absolutely no reason to blame it. We have either to put up a stiff fight against temptations, or patiently resign ourselves to the supreme will that determines all things about us. In either case, we develop an invincible strength within us, which enables us to conquer all the internal foes that marshal themselves against our attainment of the goal. Attachment to name, fame, position, comfort and wealth is as we know

a great stumbling block in the path of our spiritual evolution. We have to meditate again and again upon the core of Lord Krishna's inspiring message, "Rise above the three Gunas; transcend the dual sense of good and evil, joy and grief, success and failure, gain and loss, praise and blame, honour and dishonour, friend and enemy, likes and dislikes".

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You have so many questions to be solved. If you carry on correspondence simply with a view, from your side, to put the questions and from Ramdas' side to answer them, it will not in any way be helpful. Instead of worrying yourself over various problems extraneous to you, it will be well if you direct your vision inwards and behold the Divine there. You are thinking of the why and how of the world but not the same about yourself. Man is the centre of the universe, because God dwells within him. If you only see God, then all the problems of life are automatically solved.

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It is true, you have to suffer for your past Karma. But you must be brave and utilise the sufferings for your spiritual uplift. Your mind must be more and more attuned to the Divine in that way. Let Ram Mantra be on your lips

always. It will give you strength to bear all sufferings calmly. Let your heart be filled with true devotion. You should not allow your health to be affected by giving yourself away to worries.

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Whatever happens in your life has been determined for the best by the all-wise Providence. So you have to bear all seemingly untoward happenings calmly, in perfect surrender to the will of God. You say you have had to bear the loss of your two children. Remember, they came from God and returned to Him. Truly, nothing is yours here. Tell your wife to be patient and peaceful. Better take God's name. God's name is the armour against all attacks of dark forces that keep your mind down. Let Ramnam be continued with ever increasing zeal and vigour. Let the Nagar Sankirtan also be continued. When you lose confidence in yourself, you come to the feet of the Lord, and He lifts you up and makes you His own. Your struggle must cease and your surrender must be complete. Then God's grace illumines your heart and transforms you into His true child.

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Do not get disheartened by the fall in your spiritual progress. Undeterred, you should

continue repeating the Mantra. The changes within you take place gradually. Complete control of the mind is not attained within a short period of practice. Inner progress is going on in you. The external mind may for a time remain impure. Your Sadhana, however, will not go in vain. Ultimately, it will grant you strength to triumph over your lower nature. Do not give way to disappointment. God is your help. He will surely save you if you trust in Him. You may also spend, say, half an hour every morning, for silent mental repetition of the Mantra and meditation, sitting in an erect posture, with the eyes closed and at the same time visualising God in your heart. At other times too you should be chanting the Mantra to yourself.

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You have now all the time to yourself. This is, indeed, God's blessing. Sitting in one place you can think and meditate on God, and read about His greatness and glories and thus while away your time most usefully. Whatever situation God gives you is always for your good. Without grumbling or complaining, you should utilise every moment to the thought of God and keep your heart pure and peaceful. If you are eager to do any service for the welfare of humanity,

you can try to relieve the distress of the people in your neighbourhood. This service is nothing short of service of God.

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True service of humanity is selfless service. In the earlier stages, when you are engaged in such service, it may be that you do it for name and fame, because the ego, made however humble, seeks some selfish satisfaction. If, side by side with this kind of action, you continue with vigour your devotional practices, ending in complete self-surrender, you shall become a pure, selfless and blissful servant of God. This is the goal to be achieved. Being in tune with God, you should be active in the world. When you have gained the bliss of Brahman, you have no earthly aims and ambitions. Name, fame and wealth or any other desire will then be incapable of luring you away. You are established in a state of perfect inner contentment, peace and joy. Complete elimination of the ego is essential.

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For gaining peace of mind by freeing it from worries, the only way is to repeat constantly God's sweet and holy name. Put yourself in the hands of God and remember Him. That instant your mind will be filled with peace.

Do not ruminate over the past. Look to the future which is always bright.

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It is well that you keenly desire to realize God. If you want to lead the life of a Brahmachari, you should undergo strict spiritual discipline. You must be thinking only of God. You must strive to attain perfect purity of thought, word and deed. This is the way and no other. A dedicated life alone can take you to God. Be the disciple of the Truth within you.

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You seem to be under various kinds of obsession. The negative forces that you speak of are the outcome of your highly disturbed and uncontrolled state of mind. You should lay yourself entirely at the feet of God in utter surrender to Him. Then these forces will cease to trouble you. Your mind will then bathe in supreme peace. God is the great magician who can, by His touch, transmute even the basest life into a golden consciousness full of His light, power and joy. So Ramdas' advice to you is to commune with God by remembering Him constantly. This is the easiest means by which you can get over your present unpleasant condition. Ramdas has no other remedy to prescribe to you. You need not come here, but go on

with your devotional practices there itself.

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You are making plans for the marriage of your daughter. You know we are entirely in the hands of God. Whenever He wills, things take place. So, ours is to wait patiently until His will determines the course of events which we expect, so far as we are concerned. There is no good of worrying over matters which are beyond our control. We may make efforts, but we have to leave the results to Him. You have done your part, now it is for God to do His part. Therefore give up anxiety; rest content that things will shape themselves favourably for the marriage of your daughter. For God, nothing is impossible. May His grace enable you to wed your daughter soon!

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You may try to control your mind by adopting any kind of diet favourable for such control; but until your mind is fully absorbed in the contemplation of God, you cannot achieve any success. This can be done only by having God's holy name continuously on your tongue and in your mind. The sense of taste is controlled through the tuning of the mind with God. Otherwise, your mind runs towards delicious dishes and eatables. Take refuge in God, seek

His grace and your mind will become pure and peaceful. This is the way and there is no other

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Ramdas notes that although you are unable to move about owing to paralysis, you are in constant communion with God and experiencing peace and joy resulting from it. After all, life is so transitory on this earth. The body is a mere vehicle in which the Divine resides. The Lord is gracious in so far that, though your body is disabled, He has kept your mind alert and your heart aspiring for union with Him. May He give you perfect strength and peace! After all, God is the need of everybody. Without His remembrance man is a most miserable creature. This is what everyone whom Ramdas met even in foreign countries does feel!

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The best way to lead a peaceful life is to be content with the situation in which God places us. We seek changes and the result is we get into a worse hole than the previous one. So, Ramdas asks you to take refuge in God, and having His name on your lips, be calm, patient and cheerful. Life is not intended for becoming a prey to worries and anxieties. The object of it is to remember God and attain inner peace and bliss.

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You know all things rest in the hands of God and He means always well. So your future being in His hands, He will do what is good for you. We have to submit to Ram in all situations. It is no good wishing that He should act always according to our will. If He does not, then we call His actions vagaries. We are discontented creatures. We speak of self-surrender, but do not know how to reconcile ourselves to the lot in which He places us. This is the cause of all our miseries. Nobody else is to blame.

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It is well you are having your morning Pooja and Ramnam-chant regularly. What you have to do is to put more and more faith and devotion in these practices, so that for that period you may be lost in the joy of it. Even a short-time spiritual practice keeps us calm and serene throughout the rest of the day. You also may sit for some time, before you retire in the night, for silent repetition and meditation. This may be only for about 10 to 15 minutes. For a few days the mind will, of course wander, but don't mind that. Continue the practice. Gradually you will have steadiness and tranquillity of mind.

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Meditation is an attitude of mind. If we cultivate the right attitude, then the mind will not wander, but will only remember God within. For remembrance, mental repetition of the Name is essential. Continued remembrance leads to self-surrender or elimination of the ego-sense. Those who sit for so-called meditation, without remembering Him, are playing with the mind, and the mind in its turn makes them tools, and distraction is the result. It is not that the body alone should be still, but also the mind.

To achieve stillness of mind is not easy, and when both the body and the mind are quiescent, then comes true meditation which leads to the awareness of our real self or to the consciousness of the Divine. The Name repeated mentally or orally, automatically produces absorption of the individual self in the Cosmic Self and attainment of supreme, eternal bliss and peace; and that means all-round spiritual illumination even on the physical plane. This is the divinisation of the entire being of the seeker, beyond which there is nothing to achieve.

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Ramdas does not belong to any particular creed. He firmly believes that all creeds, faiths and religions are different paths that converge

to the same goal. Know that the God you seek is within yourself. He is the life and soul of the universe and to attain Him is the supreme purpose of life. Leave off all narrow limitations. Rise, soar and grasp the whole world in one embrace of Love. Your dwelling place is the whole universe. You live in it as Love.

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You know there is only one remedy—the one that Ramdas used to destroy all the weaknesses and low desires of his mind—and that is taking refuge in the Name. All other things that you do to bring about an inner transformation are of no avail. Believe in this definitely and go to the Name for your liberation from the thralldom of the senses. There is no other way. That is the plank in the stormy ocean when you are drowning. The Divine Name is the one and only great unfailing saviour. Depend upon it, devoting the remaining period of your life for repeating the Name.

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You should free yourself from distrust about your husband. He may not mean any harm by smiling at his girl pupils. Recognition of pupils on the road does not mean anything objectionable. Ramdas advises you to repeat God's name constantly and free your mind from doubts instead

of thinking of suicide. Suicide is not a solution for any problem of life. Do not take any hasty steps and create misery for your children and husband. Be wise, considerate and peaceful. God's name is a panacea for all the ills of life.

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Now, as regards the cases mentioned of devotees meeting with a fall in their spiritual career, Ramdas can say that, although there may be a temporary set-back in their progress, they will gather strength and go forward with greater force. You have read of Yoga-bhrashtas in the Gita. They are never lost. Ramdas finds now that those about whom he has mentioned are gaining momentum towards final illumination and release. They are bound to attain the fullness of spiritual experience. The Divine Mother will not let them fall permanently. Her love and grace are marvellous. The human mind cannot gauge or comprehend it.

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Emancipation means the realization that you are the eternal Atman. You are always That. Only you have to know it. That is freedom.

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Renunciation should be mainly internal. External renunciation comes to a few at the call of God when they are chosen for a special mission to be performed in spreading His message in the world.

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When you have once realized God, that is, when you have attained Brahma Jnana, you retain this experience at all times. You live, move and have your being in God and thereafter you enjoy eternal bliss and peace. This is the aim of life.

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In all matters you should submit to the will of God, It is no good grumbling and feeling worried. The object of all spiritual practices is to remain calm by resigning to the will of God in all circumstances. Ours is to play our part well in this life, with full faith in God. Our real success lies in living such a life. Therefore Ramdas advises you not to be dispirited. You are entirely in the hands of God. Those who trust in Him are never lost.

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Keep the Name ever ringing in the heart by constant repetition of it. Ramnam purifies the heart and illumines it with divine light and joy,

making the eyes behold only Ram everywhere. Whomsoever we see, we recognise him or her as the very form of Ram—Ram having become all for us. This glorious vision grants us inexpressible bliss and ecstasy. It is God now for us in and out, everywhere. Verily, we become the very images of God. It is God seeing Himself in and as all beings.

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God gives us trials and sufferings not because He is cruel. We must cherish the faith that He does so for our own good. When we pass through sufferings, we become more and more acceptable to Him; for, tribulation and sorrow purify us, and so enable us to completely surrender to Him. Therefore do not be cowed down by suffering. Come out of it ennobled and elevated.

Keep calm and peaceful in the thought of God, and you will be well again soon. Anxiety and regret retard one's progress towards health. Take all the circumstances in which you are placed as for the best. This is the penance for health of both the body and the mind. Whenever help comes to you from anybody, accept it as coming from the supreme Lord. He is always kind and merciful. Be calm and resigned.

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If you do not wish to be caught up in the whirlpools of worldly life, and if you possess a firm determination to dedicate your life entirely to divine service, keep up the flame of Vairagya ever burning, by resorting regularly to solitude for meditation. Too much contact with the world will distract you from this lofty purpose of life.

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Where there is a will there is a way. What an aspirant needs is an unshakable faith in Providence and a complete submission to His unerring will. When he reaches this stage, he no longer requires any Sadhana. An unchanging consciousness of the existence of divinity, within and without, sustains his life; and he feels always free and blissful in all situations, and in all activities of life. Saints give you the touch; then, it is for you to raise yourself, through faith, to the ultimate state of perfect self-surrender.

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However God may deal with us, let our faith be firm that He is merciful and kind. In this faith, let us live and die. There is no religion higher than this.

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Make God your strength and hope in all things. Feel that you are under His guidance and protection at all times. Leave your progress in His hands. Surrender gives you peace and assurance. Sit up for a short time, every day, in silent meditation, and offer yourself up entirely to God within you,

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Mere grumbling and worrying over things will not do. Assert your manhood. Assert the divinity within you, Do not be cowed down by adversity. With God as helper, transform your life into one of useful activity. Give up laziness and depression. Whatever you do, be earnest and determined. Concentrate all your energies on the task in hand. Remember, "God helps those who help themselves".

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Mere intellectual understanding of things is entirely different from spiritual experience. What is required of us is to live the life which we idealise—not to talk and write beautifully about it, but to actually live it beautifully. True spiritual power and knowledge, far from working any evil on you, will elevate and ennoble your existence. Strive to attain the goal with all your strength and soul. There is no mystery-mongering about it—nor are there any occult subtleties. The path of surrender

to God is the easiest and the safest path. Put yourself into His hands, in humility, laying aside all your vaunted pride of learning and other things. Be the child of the eternal Parent.

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What you want is eternal bliss and peace. To tune your mind with this great Reality within you, ceaseless remembrance of Him is the way. The one means to this end is the repetition of His all powerful and extremely sweet Name. Keep it ever on your tongue, and you open the very floodgates of immortal Bliss. You get merged in the supreme Being, who is the very Lord of the universe. Oh! the power of the Name is simply indescribable. His name and He are not different.

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Do not worry about unessential things. Shiva and Rama are not different. You seem to make some difference between them. They are the forms of the same Truth. So you may meditate on any one of these forms, and repeat either Rama or Shiva Mantram. At one time, you say that you like Shiva Mantram and Shiva Dhyana, and at another time, Rama Mantram and Rama Dhyana. This shows that you have love for both.

Therefore you may adopt any one of the two, bearing in mind that they signify the same God.

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Since you are married, live the family life. Family life cannot come in the way of your devotion, if you surrender all your actions to God. Think that the work you are doing is God's own service. Be kind and good to all. If you join the trade, you will gain steadiness. Make the work itself your worship. At other times, do your Sadhana. This Sadhana will enable you to dedicate all that you do to the Lord.

The sudden stoppage of Sadhana is due to lack of occupation. You must be active. Else, laziness will swallow up the good effects of your spiritual practices. Take pure and simple food and in moderate quantities.

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You are passing through severe trials and you must come out of them bravely. Bear all things with perfect faith in God. Clouds come and clouds go; for yourself, be firm and unshaken like a rock in the storm. Carry on your morning meditation and also Japa.

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In all your troubles you should as far as possible keep yourself brave, calm and serene. Be patient. Feel conscious that God within you is guiding and protecting you in every way. You are on the path of Truth and selfless service. As such, God should help you and see to it that you achieve success. For yourself, be straightforward and bear no ill-will to any one.

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In spite of the antagonistic influence around you, be firm in your faith in the Name. In order to keep mind and body perfectly cool, adopt Satwic diet. Start the practice of taking bath with cold water, instead of hot water. Don't allow yourself to be caught in conversations in which God-thought is absent. Have recourse to solitude now and then. Believe that you are in the hands of God and He will protect you in every way.

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Be where you are. Don't worry yourself about this Mantram or that. Repeat any Mantram that you like; but stick to it alone for your daily practice. By carrying on discussions in your mind about the question of the Mantram, you are unnecessarily wasting

your precious time. You can bring up, in your mind, any image of God you hold dear. However, set about concentrating your mind upon the great Reality, the basis of your life and of the world-life. Doubts, fears and restlessness are great impediments. Avoid them.

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In the early morning and also in the evening, sit up in a lonely spot and have meditation on the glorious attributes of God. You can utter the Mantram at all times. Your taking the Mantram even in the street, and at all places, is perfectly right. The repetition of the Mantram should totally seize your mind, and should go on automatically, wherever you are. Don't mind anybody's criticism in this matter. Go ahead.

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Shivamantram and Ramamantram relate to the same Divine. Now, since you have realised this fact, you may repeat, in future, Shiva-mantram for your practice. But do not have any dislike for the other names of God. God's names are innumerable. For Dhyana, have ShivaMurti. Meditate in your heart. Ultimately, rise above all names and forms. Look upon the entire universe as the image of the Lord.

The Lord is infinite and eternal. He is Sat-chit-ananda. Contemplate always on His glorious attributes. Believe that the Lord's Kripa is always on you. Love the Lord with all your heart. Through concentrated thought, merge your mind in Him. You may continue Shiva-Sahasranama and Shiva-Kavacha. Repeat "Om Namah Shivaya" with your every breath.

Aim at the Universal Vision, *i.e.*, at beholding the manifested universe as the very form and image of the Lord seated in your heart. Transcend all names, forms, lights, sounds *e.t.c.*, and merge yourself in the infinite ocean of divine peace and joy. Rise above the body idea, the Gunas and all mental states, and enjoy the bliss and freedom of immortality. You and the supreme Lord are one, not different. You are His essence, nay, His very form; because, there is none and nothing but He. This is the Truth. Realise it!

The true devotee is he who, under all adverse circumstances, remains unshaken like a rock because his trust in the Almighty is so firm that it does not admit of any vacillation. You are bravely facing all adverse circumstances

that have fallen to your lot. You may depend upon it that Ramdas is always with you in your struggles against hardships.

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To live from moment to moment means to be conscious of your immortality. Feel always that you are the supreme, undying Reality, and the circumstances and affairs which seek to involve you are passing phases of life over which it is not worth while for you to worry. This is possible when you have surrendered your little self to the Higher Self completely. Why do you doubt that Ramdas' "wonderful energy" is not transmitted to you?

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There are two ways of approach to God. One is by way of both internal and external renunciation and the other by only internal renunciation. The former is the way of the Jnani and the latter is the way of the Bhakta. Suka, Shankara, Jada Bharata are of the first type and Janaka, Eknath, Tukaram are of the second type. An aspirant can follow either of the two paths.

If you feel that your way is of total renunciation of your present mode of life

for attaining the Truth, you may, by all means, adopt it. If your mother is alive it would go hard with you to renounce, If not, you have a clear way. But, before you take the step, consult in deep meditation the great Power that is within you as to whether you are now fit to walk upon this path. If you receive a definite lead from within, shake off, abandon and cut off all your existing activities and dedicate your entire life to the search and realization of God. Ramdas can well imagine the keen struggle through which you are passing. You cite Ramdas' example. Yes, in his case he had to give up everything in order to realize God. He had felt an emphatic call from within to do so. So also, if you feel the call, by all means surrender your life into the hands of God and become His embodiment upon earth as all saints and sages are. Ramdas, from his contact with you, has found out that you have the necessary mettle for the life of a Tyagi. Whatever way you adopt, either that of the Bhakta, or of the Jnani, you may depend upon it that Ramdas' and Mataji's blessings are ever with you.

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Your resolution in not renouncing your present mode of life, in view of the service

you have to render to your mother, is perfectly right. Mother is, verily, God Himself in human form.

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When you feel that you are nowhere, then it is that you are in tune with that supreme Spirit who is everywhere. Do not worry. Feel that He is dwelling within you and making you do all things according to His will. Surrender, unqualified and all-sided, alone permits the divine Grace to enlighten you. Give up the "I" consciousness and be perfectly at peace. You may be sure that whenever Ramdas smiles, he means nothing but blessings. Be patient and realize the supreme God of love and bliss within yourself.

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Do not feel upset. Work should go hand in hand with devotion. You have to do actions in a spirit of dedication to God. Do not separate action from worship. Do all your work as the Puja of God. God is not merely a silent and actionless Truth but also the Power that moves and works in the world. You know Yoga means skill in action. Your heart must work in the world doing His service.

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When your aspiration to realize God is keen, you may depend upon it that the divine Power within you will afford you opportunities and grant you the necessary will and strength to devote your time to His remembrance and meditation. Whenever you attempt to repeat the sacred Mantra, do so in a spirit of utter surrender to that Power. God is infinitely kind and merciful. His grace will descend on you, through the Guru. Your Sadhana is Satsang.

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Feel always that God is dwelling in your heart and is making you do all things. This stage is self-surrender. Yes, even when you take the Name you must realize that you do so by the will and power of God. God is all, and all in all. He is the Life of your life, the Breath of your breath and the Soul of your soul. Know this truth.

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Whenever the darkness of Maya overtakes the mind, the best remedy for dispelling it is Satsang or the society of saints. Have the needed Vairagya or dispassion for spiritual attainment and also have great faith in the redeeming influence of saints, of men of divine

light and peace. You may depend upon it that Ramdas is sending you his spiritual power for elevating you to a divine consciousness. Ramdas is not merely a person, but also a power that works for the purification and illumination of the souls that come into contact with him. Can you not make it convenient to pay us a visit? You have to see here an enlightened soul, of whom you must have heard and read, Mother Krishnabai, whose Darshan will be of very great help in your spiritual progress.

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If you are really earnest in remaining a Brahmachari all your life, maintaining strict Brahmacharya, you should not enter into married life to please anybody in the world. But merely remaining a bachelor, without the necessary discipline for keeping the mind perfectly pure and under full control, is of no avail. To run away from the life of the world is also not the solution. If you are determined upon observing the vow of Brahmacharya, fully realizing its implications, you can explain to your parents the exact state of your mind and beg of them not to put pressure on you to marry. Be open and frank with them. In fact, you can more efficiently serve your aged parents by

remaining a true bachelor than by having a wife and children.

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For practising Brahmacharya, the one thing you have to do is not to fall into the cultches of Tamoguna. You must be ever alert. Cultivate the habit of getting up early in the morning and spending some time in mental repetition of the Mantra and meditation. In the evening have a walk to some quiet open spot where you can be in tune with God through communion with nature. Have also moderation in food and sleep. Above all bear in mind that the divine Mantra is the most potent factor for attaining perfect purity of mind. Ramnam must be constantly on your lips. Remembrance of God must be unbroken. When the mind is filled with thought of God it will not be difficult to observe Brahmacharya of mind and body.

On the other hand, if you are not so advanced as that and your will is not strong enough to control your mind in the matter of sex, you can as well marry a girl who is, like you, spiritually minded. Married life need not be considered as an obstacle to God-realization. The difficulties and the trials of life are as much the lot of the Sannyasin as of the householder.

What is required in either case is a strong will and an illumined mind, to withstand the attacks of the senses. In the world, even at the present day, we can see householders, with wife and children, leading a pure, devout and noble life, all dedicated to the adoration and service of the supreme Lord. Do not, therefore, think that a life of spiritual Sadhana and attainment is not possible in a householder's life. In fact, a householder's life offers better opportunities for devotional practices than that of a bachelor whose distracted mind leads him sometimes into wild and unregulated ways of life. So, give up the notion that married life is detrimental to the attainment of God.

Ramdas has, in the above lines, given you an idea of both the life of a Grihastha and of a Brahmachari. The choice has to be made by yourself. After taking a definite step, never repent afterwards!

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It is well that you are having a stiff fight with your obstinate mind. This struggle must have given you sufficient experience to understand the nature of human mind—its weak as well as its strong points. In the light of that experience you can now very well judge as to

what you should exactly do in order to bring it under subjection. If your aspiration to control it is keen and determined, you will realize that some drastic changes in your habits of life are absolutely necessary. Do not yield. Put up the fight again and again, even if you fail repeatedly in the earlier stages. Place implicit reliance on on divine guidance from within. Ultimately, if you persist in your effort, you are bound to succeed.

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Cultivate the consciousness that keeps you detached from the mind and its antics. This can be done only by your continued remembrance of the divine Power that resides in you and which is the witness of all that takes place in you. Despair and dejection are enemies on the path of spiritual progress. Falls and failures are inevitable in the course of the grim struggle against the restless nature of the mind. Your elevation and emancipation rest solely with you. The struggle and endeavour must be your own. To give up the fight fearing that it would bring you no success, is to exhibit a weakness that does not befit one gifted with a lofty power of the intellect and the heart. Let not failures daunt you. Go on with greater intensity of purpose than before. On no account yield to a

mind that seeks to lead you astray.

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Prayer is a sincere outpouring of the heart from its inner silence. It is always offered to the Almighty seated within our hearts. He is, as you understand it, both inside and outside us. The highest form of prayer is to constantly dwell in the divine consciousness which is brought about by a ceaseless remembrance of Him. By such remembrance alone do we draw the needed strength and delight to keep us free and unaffected in the multitude of experiences, both pleasurable and painful, that we come across in this life.

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The view of Swami Vivekananda on the need for a Guru is correct. The other view that a Guru is not necessary is purely Western. In the West they do not believe in the guidance of a Guru. But history shows that none has reached the spiritual summit without a guide. Even those who say they had no guide, but have reached the supreme goal, must have received light and inspiration from some divine personal source of which they may be unconscious. Satsang is, therefore, held to be a most important factor in the progress of a Sadhaka.

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You are right in thinking that Sri Aurobindo, Sri Maharshi and Ramdas are one. May you be blessed with the permanent consciousness of this unity! It is good that you are attending the Kirtan at R's house. Namasankirtan or Namadhun yields pure happiness. It raises you immediately above your body-idea. The divine Name is a powerful antidote for the restless nature of mind. There is absolutely no reason for you to worry about anything. Be contented with what God has given you. True is the saying "Contentment is a continual feast". By surrendering yourself to the divine Spirit or Atman within you, be ever filled with peace and bliss.

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Faith and faith alone leads the aspirant to his goal. It is no good abusing God. You have to reach Him through Love. Love does not admit of such abusive thoughts. God is Love. He is all kindness and mercy. Whatever He does for you is always for the best. By understanding Him as such, you have to soften your heart and purify your mind. In all matters, surrender yourself to Him, and then you will be free from fear. Take his name constantly. It is well that you are free from fear in solitude. Be brave, pure, mild and happy.

Realize that the same sureme Reality has manifested as Ramdas, yourself and all beings and creatures. Whatever way you may look upon this play of diversity, in the depths of your being there is only one Truth and one Existence. Ramdas loves you as much as he can. He wishes he could do so more. In love there is no fulfilment and no end, because love is infinite. The more you drink of it, the more thirsty you become for it. There is no satiety in love. Love is God. Know that you are this love. Know that you are also the silent and immutable Truth behind it. Ramdas read your letter to Mother Krishnabai. She listened to it in all serenity. Mother Krishnabai grants you purity and Ramdas grants you bliss. Now realize that the great God is dwelling within you and that you are His expression, nay, you are He.

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The Light that we seek, the Truth that we seek, is within us. Know this and be free. Freedom and bondage are of one's own making. It is well that all those on whom we lean in the world abandon us. For, this experience leads us to take refuge in God. God is the true support and shelter of all.

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Our plans are of no avail. We must submit to His will and await His command. He is dwelling in our hearts. In the prevailing gloom it is the ray of light He sends that should guide us. It is God that puts us into all the situations we find ourselves in and we have to act the part allotted by Him dispassionately.

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If a man desires real peace and freedom, he ought to realize his supreme Self. You know you do not get real happiness by merely having plenty to eat and fine dress to put on. You cite the case of Soviet Russia. Russia may be rolling in material wealth and people there may be free from starvation, but their soul's hunger for peace can never be appeased in this way. When they are subject to the losses of their dear ones, and also for various other reasons which life provides in plenty, their minds are bound to be filled with pain and sorrow. Where can they take refuge for strength and solace? In spite of material possessions, a man's mind harbours doubts, fears and anxieties. True freedom and happiness they can attain only when they realize the supreme bliss and peace of the Atman. If you leave God out of your calculations, you become like a mere animal, whose sole purpose in life is to eat, propagate and ultimately die. But man is

more than an animal. Man is essentially divine. He is an immortal and changeless Spirit. If you could enter into the hearts of the present-day Russians, who seem to be on the surface happy, provided as they are with all the necessities of life, you will find that their inner life is not quite free from troubles and problems, that their minds are hot-beds of thousands of unfulfilled desires and unquenchable flames of restlessness. Peace is in God and God alone!

Part III

HINTS TO ASPIRANTS

PART III

Ramdas very well appreciates your heroic nature. Death is as natural as birth. The Spirit is immortal. So there is no sense in being afraid of death. You may be sure that there is no likelihood of war in the near future. May God avert it for all time to come!

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Verily, it is not the external conditions that are the cause of our unhappiness. We suffer because of the egoistic feeling that we are doing everything. In other words, our ego-consciousness is the cause of all mischief and misery. Resignation to the will of the Divine is the only way by which we can effect our final release.

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It is not necessary that you should perform many Asanas. It is sufficient if you sit in an easy Asana for your meditation. What you should mainly do is to keep your mind ever filled with the thought of God and His attributes. When your mind goes more and more within,

the incentive to read books naturally disappears.

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You know how Mirabai, the famous devotee of Lord Krishna, was grossly misunderstood. It is perfectly possible to extend our love to our friends and elders without the sex-idea. God is Satchidananda—Absolute Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. He is seated in the hearts of all beings and creatures. To really behold Him means to realize Him in our own hearts. Truly, He is our only true relation and the dearest one.

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In the early stages, you must know, sufferings that come to us are experienced as unpleasant. But when we have realized the fullness of divine grace, troubles and sufferings are felt by us quite in the opposite way; they not only do not affect us but are also transmuted into joy. Your mind will attain perfect peace by the power of the Mantra.

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When we see faults in others, we must remember our own faults. But we usually forget our own weaknesses. It is perfectly true that we suffer mostly because of our own failings. We remember only the sufferings inflicted on us by others, but do not remember the sufferings we inflicted on others. This is true of human

nature in general. It is not healthy to have a mind rankling with bitterness and sorrow. So Ramdas exhorts you to drive away the darkness that has clouded your Spirit and be happy and cheerful.

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Ramdas knows there is no rancour or ill-will in your nature. You can therefore easily shake off all disturbing thoughts and be bright and free. Let your loving nature get the upper hand. May this aspect become the entire glory and delight of your life! Really, love is the most precious possession on earth.

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Ashram is a shelter for worried souls. You are always quite welcome to it. Sympathy for the suffering world is the mark of liberated souls. Liberation is there always for us all. But sympathy, service and love for the poor, depressed and sorrow-stricken are the true acquisitions of an illumined life.

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The only way to have our mind ever filled with true peace and bliss is to continuously keep our thought in tune with the great Truth dwelling within us. By a practice of the repetition of the Ram Mantra the mind can be made to dwell always in God-consciousness. The more we draw our mind inward, towards the contemplation of

the Lord, the greater will be its freedom from the restlessness and the turmoil of external desire and attachments. This process will gradually eliminate the ego-sense, and bring about a state of complete self-surrender. It is not really easy to bring under control the obstinate fickleness of the mind. A steady and sustained discipline is essential. Certain hours in the early morning, and before retirement to bed, must be devoted entirely to the remembrance and meditation of the Lord.

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The secret of true Darshan is continued remembrance of the Lord. Have this, and you may be sure, you will have no reason to think that you are sinking in ocean of worldly life. The divine Name is rightly compared to a boat, which keeps one safe and secure above water. Much of the time that we waste in useless talk and activities, and also in harbouring futile worries and anxieties, can be well utilised for remembrance of the Lord. A strictly disciplined and regulated life alone can grant us true happiness and peace even in the so-called whirlpools of life.

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Courage, endurance and cheerfulness are essential things for success in life. To be

cowed down by the passing incidents and events of life is to lose manliness. So, bravely face all the difficulties of life, and reveal the inherent glory and supremacy of the immortal Spirit that dwells within you. Let every hit and knock that you receive in life be a direct incentive for turning your thoughts to God. Dejection and despondency do not become a man. Man is called Purush, which term signifies grit and boldness. Be active and ward off Tamasic influences.

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Do not be disturbed over the criticism of the world. You will find in the lives of all saints and devotees, there was persecution and obloquy. Those who are devoted to God and are living a righteous life are often misunderstood. People spread false reports about them and try to make their life miserable. You should be brave and not mind what the world says about you. Go on with your spiritual practices with full faith in God. May He grant you strength, courage and peace!

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Man's success and failure, as also joy and grief, depend upon the condition of his mind. This life is a great responsibility placed on us by the Almighty who dwells within us

It is not intended for misuse or misapplication. You should be able to ward off dejection and despair, by a thorough control of the mind, and assert the indomitable strength of your immortal existence.

Put down with a firm hand all the wayward thoughts that harass and worry you. You must also firmly set up a lasting ideal to live for. You cannot be for ever like a vacillating pendulum, swinging between the opinions of the world and your own way of life. Act always in an honest and straightforward manner without minding the criticism of the world.

You should also regulate your daily life so that you can utilise some time in the mornings and evenings, for the concentration of your mind on the lofty goal of life, namely, the eternal Truth, that dwells within you. You can have peace, success and freedom only on this path, and on no other.

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You must give up all habits which create restlessness in your mind, by the exercise of a strong will. You must put your heart and soul in your work, and prevent your life from running into barrenness. Be useful and helpful to people at large. Infuse enthusiasm and

spirit into your life, and thereby turn it from the path of apathy and futility to one of fruitfulness and joy.

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The Guru, that you seek, is in reality, within yourself. Ramdas is only an instrument in the hands of the divine Guru, who is the all-comprehensive Reality, to inject into those who come in contact with him, the Ram Mantra which brought him face to face with the supreme Guru. So, if you feel that you should receive the Mantra from Ramdas, you may pay us a visit, as proposed by you.

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All the trouble you are having now is due to nothing else but the false obsession of your own mind. Do not think that anybody or anything outside yourself is responsible for the life of misery which you are leading at present. Man is the master of his destiny. He can raise himself to the summit of the highest attainment or permit himself to be dragged down to the lowest depths.

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If you sincerely wish to change your present unpleasant condition for one of strength, cheerfulness and freedom, all the power needed to do so to remould your life—

is within you. What you require is a strong and indomitable will and the necessary endeavour to bring about the transformation. Do not be cowed down by superstitious beliefs and enervating influences from outside, and do not be a prey to unfounded fears and doubts.

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You may be aware that a man's state of mind largely depends on the habits and conduct of his life. If he examines himself with a deep introspection, he will certainly discover the weak points which hinder him from living a life of peace, power and success. The direct method to eliminate the frailties that have caused commotion in your life is to train your mind to dwell more and more in the contemplation of the supreme divine Truth and Power which is within you.

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It is rightly said that suspicion and doubt are as poisonous as a mad dog's tooth. The degrading and down-pulling force, that you have observed often working in you, can be vanquished by the assertion of your divine and all-powerful nature. Do not give way to despair and dejection. As you tune yourself

with this great Power the evil obsession will be rooted out of you.

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If you are in the habit of leading a sedentary life, Ramdas would have you take long walks, and breathe the fresh and rejuvenating air in the open. If you are addicted to any stimulants, such as tobacco, tea or coffee, you should abandon them altogether. Whenever you have no inclination to sleep in the night, you should sit up for meditation on the Lord within you, and for silent repetition of the Mantra—"Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram". Even though, at the outset, the mind may wander, you should persist in the repetition and meditation and you may be sure your restless mind will be brought under control.

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Do not have any anxiety about your wife. Your anxiety will not in any way change the course of destiny which alone determines the events in the lives of all beings—also the life of your wife. Leave the question of her ill-health in the hands of God. We are here in this world, not to be worried over things but to do service patiently. So, do take care of your wife; but do not harbour any curious thoughts about her. Attentively go through this letter

and taking the hints contained therein, adjust the conduct of your life in such a manner that you can be free from the troubles which are solely due to your thoroughly uncontrolled mind.

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There is a Kanarese song of a great South Indian saint which begins with this line:—
 “When my Karma is strong against me, what can you do, Oh God?” Sometimes God does appear to be unable to destroy the effects of a devotee’s past Karma. There is no escape from them. So, instead of fretting and fuming over your present condition, take it as willed by Him, and be resigned and peaceful. No future prospects, however rosy it may appear to be, can dispel your present woes. It is only by surrender to the will of the Supreme that you can be always happy and contented under whatever conditions you may be placed in life. In spite of bitter experiences, man is never tired of running to catch the receding horizon, the will-o’-the-wisp of the transitory objects of life.

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Yes, in the householder’s life Nam-sankirtan and Bhajan are the mainstay. Let the atmosphere of your house be always thrilling with the sound of the divine Name.

In such a house there is always a spiritual atmosphere which has a wholesome reaction on the health of the inmates—both physical and mental Bliss there rises in floods. So take firm hold on the divine Name and you will never suffer in the world. Verily, the Name is God and He is present where His name is sung with love. God's Kripa is always pouring on you. Be aware of it.

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If you develop a keen longing to realize God, drowsiness must automatically disappear. Be alert always, recognizing the fact that human life is intended solely for realization of God. By surrendering yourself to the Divine within you and outside everywhere about you, open yourself to receive Grace which is ever flowing from God. What you have to do is, by making your heart open and receptive, allow it to enter into you and transform you into the being of God Himself. Believe that God is all in all. It is by His power alone all things happen and all movements take place. Is is the ego that stands in the way of our attaining the higher Consciousness and Bliss. Get rid of the ego by laying it at the feet of the Almighty.

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The sounds that you were hearing during meditation are the necessary outcome of your practice and show that you have made a very good advance. You have now developed a highly concentrated mind, and reached the state of Shuddha Sattwa. The next step for you is the attainment of Jnana, or the vision of your immortal, all-pervading, changeless and blissful Atman, and the resulting Universal Darshan of the Lord.

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Rise above duality in your meditation, by merging yourself in the supreme Guru, who guides you from within. Let your burning aspiration be for the vision of the Lord in the visible universe with all beings and creatures in it. Never leave the name of the Lord. Have it always on your lips. Your reading of the Gita will give you an exact knowledge of the state you have to attain, which is the absolute bliss of immortality—by the transcendence of the Gunas and Dwandwas—the height of Parabhakti.

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With the power of the faith which you possess, nothing is impossible to achieve. So, constantly tune yourself with the almighty Truth. Do not merely seek to regain physical

health, but also thirst for the bliss and freedom of Immortality. The body is, after all, a perishable thing, subject to disorder and disintegration. Have no anxieties about it.

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Sadhana consists mainly in a continuous flow of God-remembrance. This you can have in almost all situations and circumstances of life. So far as the body is concerned, to keep it fit you must see that it is nourished on pure, easily digestible and wholesome food. Exercise and pure air are also necessary to keep it healthy. When the rules of health are neglected, the body inevitably suffers. So take care of the body but, at the same time, discipline your mind for a prolonged meditation on God.

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In the initial stages, without effort on our part, prayer cannot produce the desired results. True is the saying; 'God helps those who help themselves'. Be up and doing. Shun inactivity and moods of despondency. Court solitude. Conserve both physical and mental energy, and utilise it for your spiritual evolution and for the service of humanity. The ocean of infinite power is within yourself.

Ramdas' task is only to awaken you to the awareness of it. Draw strength and sustenance from this inexhaustible store, and mould your life so that it may perennially yield joy to yourself and others.

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By continued remembrance of God, who is the one sole giver of peace and happiness, calm down the disturbing waves of your mind and attain to the inner joy of the Eternal. 'Work without worry' is the goal to be attained in this life. Learn the secret of surrender to the will of God. Let no fits of melancholy and shocks of disappointment seize and affect you. Do all your actions as the dedicated service of God, without hanging on to name, fame and glory of the world. Be selfless, simple, pure and humble in your life. This is the essence of true life.

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If you want to walk on the divine path, you ought to regulate the conduct of your life in such a way that you might gradually maintain, in your thoughts, a consciousness of the great Truth dwelling in you, which is also pervading everywhere. Useless frittering away of energy, especially mental, must be

controlled. By steady process of concentration on the great ideal alone, you can resist the attacks of worries and anxieties. Keep the goal of perfect peace dazzling in front of your mental vision.

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A deep introspection and a persevering attempt to enter into the higher and exalted consciousness of your being will enable you to raise an invincible power within yourself, so that you can wield the internal and external forces to your best advantage. Realize that you are the immortal and all-blissful Spirit, and not merely a body which is only an ephemeral mask assumed by the Spirit for its play. Dive deep within yourself to know the secret and eternal source of your existence. The way to success, peace and power lies in this direction.

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The Gita says, "You have the right to do action but have no right to the fruits thereof". When you help your fellowmen you should not expect any return—fame or name—from the world, or even gratitude from the party you have helped. Be purely Nishkama, free from desires, and then only you will enjoy

the peace of God. Your only true friend and guide is God. When you have realized His love you will be automatically loved by all humanity. "First seek ye the Kingdom of Heaven and then everything else will be added unto you", said Christ.

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The Gita is a mine of wisdom. Any pearl in it is full of light and inspiration. Why do you think that you are not a Jnani? Jnana is the very core of your Atman. Jnana itself is Atman and you are Jnana-swaroop.

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Even after a man is told that God resides within him, instead of seeking Him there, he runs about to get His Darshan in Mandirs and Tirthas. In temples you worship images of stone and metal, representing some forms of God. Such Saguna worship is no doubt helpful in the early stages. But you have to go beyond and realize the Nirguna aspect also. Through forms you have to reach the formless. You have to realize God within you and see Him in all. The immortal Truth is within you and within everybody. God is within you. Hold the light of an illumined intellect

before Him and perform Arati inside your heart.

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You have to take due care of your health. Do not neglect it. A weak and unhealthy body proves to be a great handicap in life. Without good physical health we cannot realize the aspiration for serving those about us. Continue to have Bhajan in the evenings on as many days as possible, if you cannot have it every day. A few minutes spent in singing the name of God is a good tonic to the restless mind.

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Yes, with Gurukripa you can work miracles. Nothing is impossible for a devotee who has unshakable faith and implicit trust in the almighty Guru who is within you. Trust Him in all things and He will fulfil all your aspirations. Let us not forget that the giver is always He. When He wills, He gives even unasked.

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Do not engage your mind in too many questions of the nature you have been asking, but by implicit faith in the almighty Lord, remembering Him constantly, live in peace

and contentment. Questions can be asked indefinitely, and our life then will ultimately become a big interrogation mark. Faith alone can carry a man through. Where there is faith, there are no doubts and no questions.

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Any attainment, spiritual or temporal, is entirely dependent upon the mercy of the supreme Lord. Difficulties and failures would not touch us, if we take complete refuge in Him. Trust in Him means perfect freedom from worries and anxieties.

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Always feel that Ramdas is with you watching and guiding you on the spiritual path. Your present condition of clinging to God's all-powerful Name must lead to complete self-surrender and the resultant experience of divine bliss and peace. As you begin to enjoy the inner joy more and more, the feeling of want will disappear. Through the ecstasy created by the utterance of the sweet Name, we are lifted to a higher consciousness, in which we realize our perfect oneness with God, who is the sole immanent and transcendent Reality.

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The main thing needed is the ultimate eradication of the ego-sense. By a process of self-effacement alone we can attain this. Continuous taking of the divine Name is extremely helpful in subjugating the ego-sense.

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When we speak of renunciation, we have to understand that it is not the rejection of external action that is meant but the giving up of the sense of our individual actorship in all that we do in this life. Hence self-surrender is the path. Feel always that you are dwelling in the Divine, and that the Divine dwells within you. When your mind is perfectly attuned to God, all your actions will automatically become the consecrated service of the Lord.

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Surely, it is good to dream of saints. Your dream indicates that you are getting your mind concentrated on God. It signifies that you are marching on the path. Be conscious that divine grace is ever pouring on you and it has started the work of transforming you into your real and immortal being.

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Whatever God decides about your future, take it as for your best. Don't give way to unnecessary anxiety. Submit to His will. Nobody

remains in the same state in this world for a long time. Change is the law of Nature or God. Ours is to be calm and peaceful in all situations in which He places us.

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Freedom is of the Atman within . Freedom relating to external conditions is no freedom. Realize that you are the immortal, ever free and all blissful Truth. The best way to utilize your spare time is to repeat constantly the divine Name. Learn to surrender to the supreme Being, and be ever contented. Ask your wife to repeat the Ram mantram with greater application than hitherto.

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You may worship God in any way you like, but do not forget the fact that He dwells within you. The better way is really Manasapuja. Let your mind go inward to behold Him in yourself. Know that you are one with Him inwardly and outwardly both as the manifest and as the unmanifest. External forms of worship are helpful, but do not lead you very far. By surrender to Him, one ought to realize Him as one's own Self and Being and behold Him everywhere in the universe.

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Really, we are all one in God. In the realm of immortality there cannot be any separateness. We are His children and still we are He in essence and reality. As one with Him, enjoy ineffable peace and as His children, we are filled with the bliss of His love. Wonderful is He!

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In proper time you will get what you want. What you have to do is to make your aspiration more and more intense. The day should certainly come when, at one sweep, your mind will become pure, washed of all impurities, and you will be filled permanently with light, joy and peace of the Divine. Please feel that the Divine Shakti is at work in you. Open yourself more and more to Her influence and grace. Let your ego be laid at Her feet, because She is all in all. Whatever beneficent influence you require from outside, for realization of God, is being freely directed towards you by saints. Ride on the crest of the wave of divine grace and reach the source of your being—the immutable, all-pervading, immortal Reality.

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The more you tune your thought with the almighty Divine dwelling within you, the more of self-control, purity and peace you will attain. Don't be daunted by obstacles. By the power

of God's name you can conquer anything and everything.

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The Gita says that a liberated soul, freed from the three Gunas belonging to Prakriti, realises his immortal, changeless and blissful Self and, living in the body, he acts according to the Gunas, remaining at the same time unaffected by all external contacts and events. This comes only after attaining to a state of complete self-surrender. The way to bring about this surrender has to be worked out by our own initiative and struggle. The secret of God-realization is to stand apart from the working of Prakriti or nature and to identify ourselves with the imperishable Atman. Ego is the greatest obstacle on the path. Hence endeavour on our part to destroy the ego-sense by right discipline and meditation is essential. Self-surrender is the best way to eliminate the ego. Have faith in the Lord and take perfect refuge in Him,

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Bhajan purifies our emotions and raises them to the feet of the Lord in utter dedication of our entire being. If a devotee aspires for divine ecstasy, he ought to open his heart to receive the blissful strains of divine music. Sri Krishna, the Flute Player, who enchants the

world by the sweetness and charm of His melody, is a very expression of dynamic joy. O Heart and Body, dance to the symphony of this supreme ecstasy!

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Sri Samarth Ramdas of Maharashtra assures the aspirant that if he takes the Mantra, "Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram" thirteen crores of times, he will have the vision of Sri Ram. Please note, the Mantra mentioned by Sri Samarth is without "Om" at its beginning. The Mantra which Ramdas has given you is "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram". "Om" has untold spiritual power. Hence Ramdas, from his own experience, tells you that by repeating this complete Mantra six crores of times you will attain salvation. Repeat the mantra at all times until six crores of it are scored. You need not keep account of the Mantra. When it reaches six crores, automatically, you will realize Sri Ram—your supreme Self.

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Ramdas has found from his own experience, that repetition of Mantra with *mala* is not so effective as repetition without it, for *mala* draws your attention to it while counting. Even if you repeat a lesser number of times, it does not

matter, provided by such repetition you are raised to the higher consciousness. Repeat the Mantra with full feeling and faith. Quality counts, not quantity. So do not attach any importance to counting, but repeat the Mantra putting your whole heart into it. Do meditation also. Repeating the Mantra from the book is also not the right way. If you want perfect concentration you ought to repeat the Mantra giving all your attention to it. Come out from the whirlpool of Maya.

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Do not give up taking the Name, whatever other discipline you may give up. The orthodox form of worship, with all its paraphernalia takes the Sadhaka only a little distance on the path. He must be conscious of God within him. It is to the God within that the devotee or Sadhaka should surrender himself and become one with Him. Repetition of His name with full faith and love brings about this consummation.

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When a Sadhaka keenly aspires to realize God and gets the necessary society of saints, he attains his object. God-realization is not as easy as you think. It cannot be had for the mere asking. It comes only when you have dedicated your entire life to that end. You know

a perfectly dry log alone catches fire easily and not the green and wet one. If the fire cannot burn the wet log, the fire is not to blame. So also, if the influence of saints cannot redeem you it is because you, are not ready for the great change. You cannot bargain with saints. Be pure, humble and trusting and you will achieve your purpose. Give up all doubts and also all desires.

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Really, it is by the contact of saints that the soul attains spiritual illumination. What is needed is an open and longing heart on the part of the Sadhaka to receive their redeeming influence. He must approach them in all humility and with an intense hunger for liberation. Then, as the cooling showers falling on burning sands are immediately absorbed, so the Kripa of saints enters the heart of the aspirant producing instant awakening and uplift.

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Truly, God is the great Actor in the universe. It is by His will and power alone all movements and activities take place. When you have surrendered yourself completely to Him, you enjoy the rare bliss and peace of immortality. Your life then becomes a rapturous outflow. Be calm and serene in all situations with the thought

of God in your mind. Be always brave and cheerful. Guru and God are not different. You are truly under His protection. The best service you can render is to remember Him constantly and thereby behold Him everywhere.

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The first thing you have to do is to realize your supreme Self. When you are on this path, you have to bear calmly all the blame and persecution from the world. Do not cling to the feeble straws of the worldly life, but hold on to the solid plank of pure and selfless devotion to God. By this way alone you can be saved from the storms of ephemeral life.

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You should not worry over the past. Live in the present in a state of complete surrender to the Divine. When you are His child, why do you feel helpless? Sing the name of God and be ever cheerful. Your eternal Mother is dwelling within you. She has already taken you up. She looks after you. So be ever free.

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When you surrender yourself to God and submit all things to Him, you become free from worries and troubles. Difficulties come to all alike. By taking His holy name constantly put yourself entirely in His hands. Even when

He makes you pass through severe trials. He means well. For, suffering is the fire that purifies and elevates you to your real divine life.

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If you aim at eternal happiness and peace, you should transcend all dualities and, by realizing the Self, behold Him everywhere. All other visions are relative and mere steps on the path that take you to the supreme goal. Any dream that has a bearing upon your wakeful life and helps you in your approach to God should be considered as good.

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The way to perfect peace and purity is surrender to the divine Being residing within your own heart. Constant repetition of His name and meditation on His attributes are the necessary Sadhana. Go on steadily on this path and you will attain the goal. Behold the Divine everywhere and at the same time see Him within yourself. In fact, the latter vision is the basis for the former. The Name is the sure way.

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Remembrance is Darshan. God is always with you because He dwells within you. For the realization of God, absolute surrender of the individual life to Him is necessary. The grace of saints is always upon you. An unqualified and

complete resignation to His will means the experience of the supreme knowledge and bliss of your Self. Give up all Sadhanas except taking His name, and cultivate the thought and belief of considering everything that happens and even all your actions as determined by the Divine. Nothing short of this can liberate the aspirant from the clutches of Maya.

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Give up doubts and churning of the intellect. Feel that you are a simple, unknowing child of the Lord and thus enter into His Being and realize your identity with Him. This is the easy way to reach Him. The child-like attitude towards God destroys the aspirant's low desires and passions. Do not perplex your mind with questions. Be humble, pure and cheerful by taking complete refuge in Him. Realize your immortal, changeless and all blissful existence.

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You should get what you aspire. Be confident and brave. Surrender requires effort. But here the effort is not egoistic but it is done by the will of God. Meditation will grant you absorption in the Divine within you. Do this Sadhana in the early mornings.

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Without effort nothing is gained. This is true also of God-realization. But Ramdas finds that

the effort becomes fruitul only when the grace of God has awakened you and infused into you the spirit of keen and sustained struggle. In fact, you ought to feel that it is He who is drawing you towards Him and all that you do in this state is being done by you through His will and power. May the fire of spiritual hunger consume your ego-sense and take you to the goal—God!

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Entire trust in God means relief and safety. A puny mortal, when he seeks the vision of the Lord, can do only this much—repetition of His name and surrender to His will. Surrender means taking everything that happens to one as determined by the all-merciful Lord. For the devotee, no adversity can cause unhappiness. He bravely endures everything that comes to him through complete resignation to His will. So, be fearless. Always rely on Him and be ever peaceful.

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You need not renounce the family life for attaining God. Keep your heart filled always with divine love and joy. The Mantra will take you to the goal. Behold the world as Ram's Lila. Live in perfect surrender to Him and enjoy everlasting bliss.

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When you have once taken complete refuge in God, you ought to give up all doubts and

worries. You have to think that whatever way He decides the course of events in your life, it is always for good. Worldly honour and disgrace have no bearing on His decisions. We should bravely face the criticism of the people in the world and learn to remain unaffected by their remarks. You must freely and unreservedly put yourself in His hands. When we take whatever comes to us, either praise or blame, as the doings of the Lord, and feel that He means always well, we can be happy always. He can never come to our rescue if we do not give up worrying and restlessness. Self-surrender means a mind bathed in peace and calmness, attained through a complete submission to the divine will.

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You need not be afraid that your family will ever be affected by any untoward circumstances to which you may be subjected. This fear is perfectly unfounded. Each is happy or miserable, fortunate or unfortunate in this life according to his or her own Karma. Do not, therefore, unnecessarily burden yourself with cares and anxieties about them. Prepare yourself to face any ordeal with a brave and unflinching heart. Repeat Ramnam constantly and allay the fever of the mind. This is the only way to peace.

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The Kripa of a saint is based upon the faith of the aspirant. If there is faith, everything is possible. The so-called miracles take place where the unshakable faith is present. You should not give yourself up to despair and dejection. By constant communion with the Almighty, subdue all the weakening tendencies of your mind. Ramdas is not a miracle-monger. Whatever unusual has happened through the agency of Ramdas, the credit, the glory and the power of it all are of the Lord's and Lord's alone.

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A Jivanmukta is not influenced by the opinions which the world forms of him, whether they are favourable or unfavourable. He always acts as the inner voice prompts him. By questioning and cross-questioning, you cannot arrive at the Truth, or attain to the Kripa of a saint. Implicit faith in the Lord, who dwells within you, and unbroken communion with Him can alone save you and free your mind from all doubts. Your future is in your own hands. You can make it blessed or otherwise, as you will.

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A heart that is filled with compassion, forgiveness and peace, is the true abode of the Lord. These are the words of Tukaram Maharaj. Again, these virtues would reside in the heart which is

ever longing for the Divine and that is ever filled with His remembrance. An aspirant, who sees God in saints and sages, is eminently fit for the attainment of immortality. You remember the words of Sri Krishna in the Gita. He says, those who look upon Him as the embodiment of the Highest Truth are liberated souls. To behold the human forms as the manifestation or expression of the Truth is the sure way to transform our human consciousness into the divine consciousness.

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Peace comes to us only when we throw ourselves completely at the mercy of the Lord and feel that we are ever basking in the sunshine of His infinite grace. There is nothing in life so glorious as to become conscious of divine grace and protection. By constantly meditating upon the Lord, we grow into His likeness. What is needed is concentrated thought and gaze on Him and Him alone. When we do this, all our impurities are washed away, and the divine Light within us shines out in all its splendour. The struggle of the aspirant consists in handing himself over completely into the hands of the Lord, "Not I but Thee, Oh Lord! not mine but Thine, Oh Lord!" This is the attitude of the true devotee towards his Lord.

What is primarily needed for Self-realization is perfect purity of mind. Here, purity of mind means its freedom from all desires relating to the external, perishable objects of life. The mind should be entirely devoted to the contemplation of the indwelling Divinity, so that it may gradually be drawn inward, until at last it merges in the real everlasting and all blissful Reality that is at the basis of all manifestation.

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Instead of making your mind restless with all kinds of worrying thoughts, you have to take—even as a drowning man catches at a straw—to a ceaseless repetition of the divine Name as your only refuge and help. It is high time that, whatever the world says, you should turn your mind entirely to God, nay, become veritably mad of that divine Master and Mother who is your sole protector, guide and liberator. Whether at home or outside, in all states and circumstances, be doggedly persistent in keeping the Name ever on your lips. By this means you will attain success and peace in this life.

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The key to absolute bliss and peace is the divine Name. Use this key and earn this eternal blessing. Repeat—on and on—the sweet and glorious name of the Lord. Be ever filled with

its music and you will have finally solved all the problems of your life. Don't keep harping upon the trials and difficulties of life. Face them like a hero, with the thought of God in your mind. Don't feel weak. Seek strength and guidance from Him.

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For real inspiration and peace there is nothing like spiritual communion with saints and prophets. When your mind is thus drawn within and you are absorbed in the Self, you will be unaffected by what people say about you. You cannot please everybody in the world especially when you are on the spiritual path. So be true to the Truth, the great Atman within you. Other things are secondary or of no importance. When your mind gets more and more imbued with the peace of the Eternal and when your surrender to the Divine is complete, the Divine within you will speak clearly and definitely. Always act according to the dictates of this voice. It is the voice of Truth. The inner voice is the real guide. May the infinite within you reveal Himself in all His glory and grant you changeless peace and happiness!

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It is well that you have given up the external form of worship. God, whom you aspire to

realize, is verily within yourself. Your body is His temple and your heart is the throne on which the supreme Lord is seated in all His glory. You are His embodiment and manifestation. Taking this as the central truth, meditate upon His attributes.

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Go on with your Sadhana with greater intensity and leave the rest in His hands. He will grant you the needed strength and courage to overcome all difficulties in your path. God himself has put you to the work in which you are engaged at present. Discharge it honestly. This is indeed difficult. But remember that whatever you strongly wish to be, that you become. Anyhow, don't worry. Leave things in His hands and He will get you what you want. He will make His devotee's life pure and glorious.

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You know, butter comes after churning. Similarly, after struggle comes repose. The darkest night is succeeded by the bright day. So do not despair. Look within for the dawn of divine light and freedom. Shake yourself off from the lower consciousness and assert your higher Self, your supreme divine nature. For this, Satsang is beneficial. You forget the body when you are merged in the spiritual radiance of your higher

Self, and become perfectly fearless. Then you realize you have really no bonds and therefore no need for anxieties. Take complete refuge in the Almighty and become His and His alone. Let the light and joy of the Eternal shine and reveal themselves in you.

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Do not think of death, but think of God. Death is not the end of things. Rather, think that you should, in this very life, realize the Divine and enjoy the supreme love and bliss of God. This human life is very precious. Utilize it for His meditation and service. Put yourself in His hands and give up all thought of life and death. To live in God is to attain immortality.

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The teachings of Sri Shankaracharya are always very illuminating. The burden of his message is "Dedicate your entire life to Him and realize your identity with His Being". Samsara means the cycle of births and deaths. To be free from Samsara is to attain *Amaratwa*, deathlessness, by the knowledge of your own immortal Spirit.

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When we see the death of anybody we realize how fleeting and bubble-like is this physical existence! Everything here passes away. Therefore it behoves us to turn our attention to the Real and

Immortal. The part we should play here is that of an illuminated and blissful child of God.

If you had a lapse in Brahmacharya it does not matter. Don't be dejected. Let this experience enable you to rise higher and maintain your ideal with greater firmness and success in the future. Truly every fall can be turned to be a stepping stone to success. Pray to God to grant you the needed strength to stand up with greater stability. May the divine Power within you bless you with strength to overcome the sex weakness and fear!

Falls are not unnatural. In the life of a Sadhaka they do come. But you can and must again pull up, making a firm resolution. To fulfil it, get up early morning, say, at 4 a. m., and spend an hour at least for silent, mental repetition of the Mantra and meditation. Perhaps, some slackness in this Sadhana made you lose control over your mind. See if you can sleep in a separate room and not in the company of your wife. She is, indeed, a good and brave girl. When you explain matters to her she will certainly agree to it.

Regarding birth-control, Ramdas is firmly of the opinion that the adoption of contracep-

tive method is totally wrong. Self-control is the proper way. Ramdas advises you not to have anything to do with contraceptives.

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There is a saying that one must stretch ones legs according to the length of the mat. It is always a good principle that we should spend as much only as we earn. To spend more is obviously to invite trouble. But in special ceases, when devotees depend entirely upon God for help in all matters, He provides them in a mysterious way without inflicting pain upon anybody.

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God gives sufficient to the devotees who place their entire trust in Him. You are such a devotee. Then why do you worry? Be satisfied with what God gives you. Be sure He will never give you up. When friends get angry with you for no reason whatever, do not mind about it. God is your eternal friend, who is all love and mercy. When He protects you, nobody can harm you. Be ever brave and cheerful!

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Ramdas can very well realize your mental state at present. Your keen aspiration to realize the great Truth by complete self-control is quite proper and necessary; but the question is how

to adjust your conduct in life in order to attain this goal. You say that you would like to come here for devoting a long period of your life for spiritual Sadhana; but conditions here do not permit your staying with us for a long time.

Ours is not, strictly speaking, a Sadhak-ashram. Its sole aim is humble service of all people, irrespective of caste, creed or colour, who pay visit to the Ashram. This service is of two kinds—spiritual and material. Spiritual service is rendered to those, who are keenly intent upon spiritual advancement. For their guidance and instructions, we can allow them to stay with us for a few days only. The second service consists in supplying the physical needs of the poor and the indigent by giving them foodstuffs and cloth. Now you know the programme of work which the Ashram is carrying on.

In view of your position, Ramdas can suggest to you the following:—

(1) Do not in haste give up your present employment, but with a steady purpose try to utilise every minute of your spare time in the thought of God.

(2) Whenever you are free, get away from the din and the bustle of city life, and resorting to a solitary place, such as the seashore or a hill,

spend your time in the repetition of the divine Name and meditation on the Lord's attributes.

(3) Whenever you have an occasion to come in contact with saintly souls, court their society.

(4) Attend Bhajan parties, without getting yourself involved in them, *i.e.*, merely listen to the devout songs sung at such places.

(5) Do not read any sensational literature such as novels, *etc.*, but be constantly studying the Gita and other religious books.

(6) Give up all lazy habits. Get up from your bed as early as you can, and utilise the morning hours in silent meditation, in a steady and erect posture.

Do not think that by resigning your post and going to any place—be it Anandashram or any other—you will be able to control the mind. Everything depends on the intensity of your hunger for the realization of God. Given this, the Lord Himself will see to it, that you are provided with every convenience for your march towards Him. Do not be impulsive; do not take any step to change the course of your present life, and then repent. Think well and think deep.

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Cling to the Lord in all situations. Give up all superstitious notions. Do not mind the

opinions which the world forms of you. Court the society of pure and devout souls. Do not worry about anything. Have complete trust in the Lord.

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Whenever you make any changes in your life, take it that it is done so by the will of the Lord alone. Slip into the change naturally and cheerfully. May He ever be your guide and protector!

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The goal is the awareness of your immortal existence and selfless service to humanity. You have to begin to work out this lofty ideal, in the position in which you are at present. Of course, there are the struggles and the difficulties. Nothing great can be achieved without a strenuous endeavour. There is no easy road to success in any walk of life; and on the spiritual line, it is no ordinary struggle that has to be put up.

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Try to mould your life in the light of the above suggestions and you may be sure that, if you do so, you will make rapid progress towards the great object you have kept in view. May success ever attend you!

Ramdas can definitely confirm your faith, that God does everything for good and good alone. You know the saying. "The good man suffers but to gain". Take the instance of Prah-lad, Harischandra, Dhruva and others, who, after passing through several trials, came off triumphant in the end by the grace of the Lord. You are a votary of Truth and since you take your stand upon this great principle, you have no reason to fear anything. The supreme Lord—the great Truth—can and must protect you. If the Lord cannot save devotees of your faith and love, it is futile to believe in Him and to look up to Him for rescue.

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You say, looters, robbers, unprincipled men are seen to be enjoying life. You may recollect the Sloka of the Bhagavad-Gita, which says: "What appears to be sweet and nectar-like at the outset, turns to be bitter and venomous in the end; so also what appears to be bitter and poisonous at the beginning, turns out to be heavenly nectar in the end." Such is the ephemeral nature of the joys derived from ill-gotten wealth and material possessions. Better to live a life filled with sufferings and tribulations and be honest, true and devoted to God than to be dishonest, mean, petty,

selfish and Godless, whatever the pleasures which such a life brings.

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Although at the first thought the result of the case against you appears to be unfavourable and unpleasant, the mysterious hand of God has worked out things for your good alone. It is high time that you turn over a new leaf in your life. The Lord has brought about your affairs to such a pass. Difficulties and disappointments awaken us and make us realize where we stand and what we have to aim at. So, do not feel sorry for the decision of the court in regard to your profession, but submit cheerfully to the will of the Lord.

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What you now have to do is to strike out a new line for an outlet for the energy that you possess for activity. But let such work be free from the taint of selfish ambitions. Do not crave any more for worldly wealth, fame and name. Live a life of perfect simplicity so that, as far as lies in you, you may be of help and assistance to the distressed and the needy. You may plead that you are helpless but really you are not, provided you harness the unutilised energy within you for making yourself useful in the world. The secret of success and true joy lies in living for the sake of others, and not for your

own satisfaction. Above all, keep the thought of God ever in your mind. True is the saying: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and everything else shall be added unto you". Act up to this and be content and cheerful and happy.

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It is happy news that you have put yourself under discipline for the proper control of your mind and senses. Since you are so earnest, you are bound to gain your purpose. God is the helper of those who strive and struggle with all sincerity for the attainment of the needed purity of mind for realizing Him. Therefore feel that the Divine is your help and guide.

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Meditation is important. Meditation means evacuating all fickle and wandering thoughts from your mind, and allowing it to sink and be absorbed in the immutable and infinite spirit of God.

As regards your practice of Pranayama, in course of time substitute it by a steady and one-pointed meditation. The dangerous part in the practice of Pranayama is forced Kumbhaka. Although, in the early stages, Pranayama appears to be highly useful in quelling the disturbed state of the mind, it is dangerous later on, for, as you go on, you are tempted to

practise the Kumbhaka with a greater rigour; and that results in the breakdown of the mind. Besides, Pranayama cannot by itself destroy Vasanas. Vasanas can go only when the ego-sense is given up by a complete surrender to the power or Shakti of God.

The rest of your Sadhana is all right. Keep always pure in thought, word and deed. You can devote at least one hour for Japa, in sitting posture, and also have it at other times of the day, whenever you are free—say, when you are in the train, or walking in the streets. There is no restriction of any kind for doing Japa. The more of it you do, the better.

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There is a poem in Marathi by a celebrated saint, which, in translation, runs thus:—

He who wears out his body in the service
of God,

On whose lips ever dwells the name of God,

He who walks always in the path of right-
eousness,

Such a servant of God is blessed on this
earth.

We must pray for the grace which would enable us to realize fully the spirit of service this poem inspires.

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If you are advanced enough to call for guidance from the voice within you, you must do so. Active you ought to be, because laziness is the bane of life. Whatever the great Reality residing in you bids you, carry it out in the spirit of perfect dedication to Him. One ought to depend upon the inner promptings alone for one's right guidance in life. Ramdas' conviction in this matter is firm and conclusive.

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Jivanmuktas sleep apparently like other people. But in the depths of their being they are ever conscious of their immortal state of absolute bliss and peace. Sleep with them is only rest to the body, the mind being ever in tune with God, or dissolved utterly in the Divine Essence. During waking hours they act and move, being always prompted and guided by the will of the supreme Lord, in other words they act intuitionally or as inspired by a Power, full of wisdom and love, from within.

The advantage of keeping awake in the meditation of God during Sadhana period, is that you conquer Tamasic sleep. But, sleeplessness on any other account has a bad reaction, affecting both mind and body.

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In all cases of failure and disappointment, keep your mind ever at a high level of exultation, by adopting a spirit of complete surrender to the will of God. By satsang and meditation, you can bravely withstand the attacks of worries and cares. It is no doubt a trying time. But it will pass away. Such days of stress and overwork shall not last long. God will grant you a life of peace and quietude. But now is the time when you should stand the test, and cling firmly to the feet of the Lord with all faith. Don't give in. Cultivate forbearance, strength and resignation—and you will triumph over the apparently irksome and untoward situations.

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Take refuge in the Almighty God, who resides in your heart. Surrender yourself entirely to Him and you will gain inexhaustible strength to overcome the passions, *kama* and *krodha*, that assail you. Feel always that you are in His hands, and, therefore, always safe. With the weapon of God-remembrance, you can dwell in the midst of temptations and remain unaffected. By constant practice keep your mind ever tuned to the infinite Truth.

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Ramdas wishes you not to lose heart but to put your shoulders to the wheel, and appear

again for your examination with zeal and enthusiasm. Do not think that failures and disappointments come to us in this life as evil or misfortune. Both have their mysterious and beneficent effect on our lives, if we take them as ordained by the almighty Power that controls the destinies of all beings on this earth. If we subject ourselves to moods of despondency, we considerably lose our mental as well as physical energy. This makes us weak and therefore unable to carry out any work we may have to do in the future. So, what is needed is to keep up courage, and march onwards with greater energy and purpose, and try to achieve our object, which we may have failed to attain at the first attempt.

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There is nothing so sweet and pleasing to the mind and soul of man, as the enjoyment of things offered to us through pure love. Love in fact transforms gross things into things of divine light and joy. The touch of love is really wonderful.

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It is true that we cannot be of use to others unless we live a life of sacrifice. The whole secret of self-control lies in adjusting our life in such a manner as to be of the greatest use to the greatest number. Real joy is born of such

a life. Real peace and contentment are the outcome of such a dedicated life.

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Feeding those who have enough to eat and to spare, really constitutes ill-placed charity, whilst we have, all around us, thousands of destitute people who are starving for want of a bare meal. Swami Vivekananda has rightly called them Daridra Narayanas. To offer food to these hungry people is a great Yajna in the real sense of the term. So, to relieve their distress is the right kind of worship of that supreme Lord whom we adore in our hearts.

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Have complete satisfaction that you are doing what God has enjoined you to do; and let the sense of disappointment and dejection disappear in the constant remembrance of the Lord, through the repetition of the Mantram. Keep always before you the ideal that you are here in this world for selfless service to be rendered in complete dedication to the Lord, regardless of the nature of its results. Service is joy by itself, and the remembrance of the Lord also is untold bliss by itself.

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Try to feel contented in all situations. Be full of enthusiasm in all that you do. Trust the

great Power that guards and watches over you. Make your work itself worship. If you cannot do Bhajan regularly, at least keep the divine Name on your lips constantly. This practice will grant you peace, courage and cheerfulness. Do not grumble, but get on.

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Devotees filled with true love do not pride themselves as big or great. You have heard the saying that just as rain water collects only in the velleys and not on the top of a mountain, so also sterling virtues reside only in a humble devotee.

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Do not think that the touch of saints is valueless. Without your perceiving it, you must have undergone many inner changes. If man does not spiritually evolve through the contact of saints, his regeneration can never be possible. While you admit the power of saints, how can you remain as you were twenty years ago, in spite of your frequent association with them? Be conscious of the light and joy you have received from them.

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After all, death is a common thing in the world. So, bear up the loss sustained with fortitude. All of us have also to depart from

this world one day or the other. All bodies must be resolved into their elements. But the bond of love that unites us all is unbreakable. The Spirit that dwells in us all is deathless and that Spirit is the same in all.

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You say you have no attraction for things of this world. This does not mean that your love and regard for your mother should any way be diminished. You ought to consider that to serve and look after her is to serve God Himself. Let not your service be based on your love and attachment to her merely as a human being. Let your love and service to her be the very expression of the Divine. As regards your losing her in the flesh some day, do not allow the thought of it to disturb you now. All forms and bodies have to pass away, as they are by their very nature destructible. Be fixed in the higher consciousness of your being and let not the things of passing moment unhinge your equilibrium and peace.

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Sorrow comes to man because he is deeply attached to and involved in the ephemeral objects of life. Truth is one and Truth alone is real. To realize that you are this Truth means freedom and bliss.

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It is well that Ramnam has taken possession of you, and that you are moving fast on the spiritual path. Lapses are natural as you proceed; but by continuous thought of God you will be able to attain perfect purity of mind. Have courage. Self-surrender is the goal. Do not forget this. Dedicate yourself and all your actions to the Lord and attain to immortal peace and bliss. The very fact that you are eager to realize God, shows that you have the needed Samskaras of the previous birth to help you. Go ahead!

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It is true that no man is entirely free from the hardships which human life usually entails. What is needed by the sufferer is to patiently bear and remain unaffected by the inevitable ills which befall him. Your attitude towards the ephemeral life in the world should be one of complete detachment. In fact, man's eyes are opened to the transitory nature of the world, through the bitter experiences which he gains in the course of life. Therefore, it is said that adversity has its sweet uses. Have courage and face things with a calm and dispassionate outlook. All this is possible only when you tune your thought constantly with the supreme divine Consciousness, which is your real being. The escape from the lower planes of life and

the attainment of the sublime cosmic Truth come only by complete self-surrender. This means dedication of all that you do and all that you are, to the divine Power that controls all activities in the world.

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Do not attach importance to the kind of vision that you had. You may repeat any Mantra which comes to your lips and mind. But the important thing is that the Mantra should be your mainstay. When you are getting queer experiences in meditation, pray to God within you to give you strength to overcome them. Be moderate in your night food and use the early hours of the morning for repetition of the Mantra, prayer and meditation.

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How short is this physical life? We can make the best of it only by spending it in Sat-sang. All else is worry and vexation.

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It is true, in the absolute Reality there is no duality. But in the early stages of Sadhana, it is better to avoid the friendship of undesirable persons. When your surrender is complete, God will surely protect you from all harm, even when you are in the company of bad

people. But till then, you must be careful. So seek always the society of pure souls and eschew the company of impure ones. There is no harm in telling others about your Guru's name.

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Know that nothing is in your hands. You are placed in your present situation by God Himself. What you have to do is to surrender yourself to Him and live and act under His guidance. If He chooses to change your play, it is His will. Through meditation be more and more in tune with Him and leave the rest to Him. Have pure aspiration and this will take you forward.

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It is not by merely giving up coffee that you will attain the spiritual goal. It is not by such external giving up of anything that you can reach God. The heart should be filled with the love, light, and joy of God. This is of primary importance.

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You are right in rising above all external forms of worship. Have silent mental Japa and meditation. Feel that you are a child of God.

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Sometimes, our affairs, on the face of them, seem to be extremely disappointing. But you

know the saying: "Every cloud has a silver lining." The devotee who has surrendered himself to the Divine Beloved, naturally looks upon all his vicissitudes as determined by Him for his best. It is really so.

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The intrusion of an evil influence on the aspirant when he is about to surrender to the Divine is common. Ramnam, prayer and self-surrender can alone vanquish this enemy. When God-consciousness becomes stronger in you, this evil influence will grow weaker until it will completely die out. Seek the society of a saint. His contact will greatly help you. Mainly keep Ramnam always on your tongue. The power of Ramnam is invincible but you have to put into its utterance your whole-hearted faith and reliance.

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It is not always necessary that you should take the name of the Lord aloud; but in the early stages, taking the Name aloud is a great help. If you can repeat the Name mentally, and have tutored your mind to that extent, it is not necessary that you should take it aloud. Mental repetition is more efficacious than that done through the lips.

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If you want to be free from physical illness, you must give up worrying about it and ruminating over it. You may take proper care of the body, but do not keep your mind working in anxious concern of the body, all the time. You know there is such a thing as hypochondria. We imagine we are keeping bad health, while in fact, we are quite well. We must conquer this weakness of the mind and be brave, forbearing and cheerful. If Ramnam cannot give you this strength, nothing else can ward off the fears and anxieties of your mind. Have faith in the Name and all things will become easy.

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Ramdas read the articles of Mahatmaji you refer to. The sense conveyed by them is perfectly plain and simple. What Mahatmaji wants to impress upon all spiritual aspirants is that nothing can be gained except by divine Grace and that all Sadhana is intended to fit ourselves to receive this Grace. Until Grace descends, the Sadhaka has to be struggling with the forces of his lower nature, which seek to pull him down. This is the purport of the articles, as Ramdas finds it.

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Don't mind that you had a fall. You can get yourself raised and again grow strong. Every fall has its rise. Instead of giving yourself away to despair and weakness, assert your inner strength by a determined will, and rise superior to the occasion. Take courage. God's name, taken with full faith, never fails.

Name is not to be blamed. Have faith in the Name, and go on repeating it with love of God. Control of the mind is not an easy thing. You have to struggle very hard, as everybody has to. Don't give up the thought of the Almighty and permit yourself to be led away by unregulated fancies. Rise with an undaunted purpose keeping the highest ideal before you, and you will ultimately come out triumphant in the fight.

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The Kripa of a saint transforms an aspirant only when the psychological moment for it arrives, as determined by the Lord. Since you feel that by the touch of Ramdas you will get the necessary illumination and since the present conditions do not permit of such a touch, it is clear that the time for the great change has not yet come. The future alone holds the mystery of it.

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The cure of the physical diseases from which you are suffering depends largely upon your own conduct and discipline in life. If you sincerely wish to be free from the malady, you will put yourself under strict diet and adjust the activities of your life accordingly. Merely crying to the Lord for the cure, without your observing the rules of health, is of no avail.

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Ramdas' advice to you is to lay your burden on God and take His name. No good worrying. Sorrow makes things worse. Repeating the Mantra must be done with all faith and devotion. Then the results are marvellous. It is lack of faith which is responsible for our not deriving real benefit by repeating the Name. Life is a struggle to all alike. You must be brave, and carry on placing full trust in God.

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Sorry to hear that you are finding yourself in a maze. It is now that God should be called in to set matters right. Pray to Him and be guided by Him. He wishes you should give up anxieties and leave Him to straighten out things. He is all love and mercy. Spend some time in the evening or early morning to meditate on Him so that you can lay the burden on Him and feel

inwardly free. His help comes in mysterious ways. Do not be worried. Be brave and cheerful.

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Body in old age is, of course, subject to various kinds of maladies, but what is needed is strength to bear them all patiently with the mind ever in tune with God. Body is after all a perishable thing. The Divine dwelling within it is imperishable and blissful.

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Reading Gurucharitra is really a great help. But the greater help lies in constantly chanting Ramnam. May the Name be ever on your lips!

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It is true, without sacrifice we cannot release the divine power within us—sacrifice of the ego and its attachments. This is the great Yajna. The candle cannot burn without using up its fallow. So life is intended to reveal its glory by renunciation of all its lower desires and ambitions. It is now alone that God reveals Himself in the heart of the true aspirant. You have dedicated your life to the service of the poor and ailing. May you be blessed with strength, courage and peace!

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We have been told all that has happened in regard to your family. Ramdas felt very sorry

to hear about it. Everything happens as God wills. This is the one thought that gives solace to Ramdas whenever things seem to go wrong in the lives of those who are intimately known to him and in the world in general. You should more and more rely on God and His guidance. He is within you. Be conscious of Him always.

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Ramnam gives you relief from fatigue and also refreshes your mind and soul.

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Ramdas is glad to note that you are not affected by the passing away of your eldest daughter, which shows that you are conscious of the Divine everywhere and in all forms. God is Sarvantaryami. For Him there is no birth nor death. So, separation from those who pass away physically should not cause any grief.

Let the loss not worry R. D. God takes in one way and gives more than He takes in another way. May he be free from all mental troubles. His faith will stand him in good stead. All joy and peace to him!

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It is good that R's family is now at your place enjoying the elevating Satsang of a saint. To alleviate grief there is nothing like the illuminating company of saints. When a saint visits your

house, you must know that God Himself in that form has come to you.

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You are questioning as to why you exist. You exist in order to realize that you are the immortal Self. This is the great emancipation you must strive to attain. If you wish to walk on the path of God and know what you are, your quest must be to realize your real being and existence. You are not to bother about how and why the world is. Your chief concern is yourself. You have to free yourself from egoism and selfishness and lead a pure, noble and self-sacrificing life.

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As regards discipline, you must adjust your diet, *etc.*, according to your convenience. Sattwic diet should be taken and only light food in the evenings. Brahmacharya should be strictly observed. Mantra Japa must be continuously performed. These are the few hints for Sadhana.

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Ramdas' advice to you is to lead a pure and devout life. Place before you the ideals cherished by great souls and adjust the conduct of your life in emulation of their selfless and glorious lives. Have perfect control over your mind through

practice of concentration and meditation. Make your life blessed in every way.

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God is there to save us from the clutches of selfishness and consequent pain and misery attendant upon such a life. He is all power, mercy and love. Pray to Him for His grace and guidance. He is dwelling within you. Follow up the instructions given here and you will make your life fruitful, illuminating and blissful.

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The great dispenser of things is He. Have full trust in Him and remember Him with greater zeal and concentration. Be confident, when you have once held on to His feet He will not let you down. He is the helper of the helpless and the sole refuge of those who are in distress. So, dependence on Him means full security and peace. May He grant you relief!

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Disciple's effort as such is always useless. The moment he realizes this, his surrender to God becomes complete and he feels the divine presence within and the divine power active in and through him. It is now that he enjoys the freedom and bliss of the Eternal.

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You have chalked out a mode of Sadhana in order to avert the evil influence of *Shani* (Saturn).

The powerful Ram Mantra is all-sufficient. If you trust the Mantra and Mantra-Swarup—God, who is the protector of us all, you need not have any other Sadhana.

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God's Kripa is pouring on you. Be conscious of this. Surrender is indeed a sure way to peace. No good worrying over things. What you have to do, do it with a free and unfettered mind. Company of saints is really very helpful in keeping the mind concentrated on God. But that comes to you when your hunger for it is intense.

You may use any symbol for concentration; but you may know that the sound of Ram Mantra is itself a symbol. You can fix your mind on it and you will enjoy the sweetness of the divine Name. True, your life is safe in God's hands.

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The workings of Grace are mysterious. The necessary condition for becoming aware of it is the company of saints and pure and simple aspiration to see and know God. It is no good quoting examples of others. You have to examine your own heart and find how far you are sincere and earnest in your quest of God. Intense Vairagya is a necessary condition to realize the supremacy of Grace. Keen aspiration backed

up by Vairagya and company of saints can alone enable you to walk on the path with steady and sure steps. The easiest Sadhana for control and purification of the mind is constant repetition of God's name.

Ramdas' advice to you is to repeat the holy name of God constantly with all faith and devotion. This is the simplest way to get rid of Vasanas and concentrate on God who dwells within you. Do not seek God outside. He is ever residing in your heart. By constant remembrance, become aware of Him within and then without everywhere. This is the simplest path to realize Him. Divine grace is ever with you. Be aware of this.

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To turn away the mind from the vanities and ephemeral interests of this passing world, and meditate on the Divine which is the root of all existences, is indeed to attain absolute peace and freedom.

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When the mind is perfectly still, you will have super-sensuous experiences. That is the experience of the Divine within. You will have then transcended the body-consciousness. From a deep trance you come out in a natural way. You can, if you will, remain in trance

for a pretty long time. But you will be back to the external consciousness in a normal and spontaneous way. Those who wish to be active in life and fill it with divine joy, have to take God essentially as a God of love and compassion. He has so many attributes. But He must reveal Himself in us as pure love.

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God can be ours only when our devotion to Him is perfectly pure—free from all desires. Ramdas would have you not to bother yourself about the state after death. Make the best use of the life God has given you now by devoting it more to His remembrance.

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If we look at the problem raised as to why people suffer, why accidents happen, why people suddenly die or pass through long periods of agony, from the Karmic standpoint we find that suffering and death come to man according to his past actions. What we sow that we reap. This explanation is from the point of view of cause and effect. The results of Karma are inevitably to be borne. Nobody can escape from them. Ours is to remember God constantly and know that His great power alone is responsible for all happenings.

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You should not mind about public opinion or criticism, but freely come to see Ramdas. Public criticism and persecution are natural in the case of all seekers of God. They do not get disturbed over them, but go on with their spiritual discipline undeterred.

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There is no hindrance from any body to our spiritual progress except our own mind. Let the mind think only of God. Then your path is easy.

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It would be well for you to surrender yourself to God and not to wish for anything but His grace. His grace is all comprehensive. It can automatically grant you all that you need. Reliance on God means security and peace. You should not worry about anything. This is the quality of a true devotee.

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You want to know the secret of reciting Ramnam. The secret is that you should repeat it in all humility, feeling yourself to be the servant and God as your Master. You must also feel that you are so repeating by His will and command. You know that He is seated in your own heart. As such, by constantly thinking on these lines, you will become consc-

ious of His presence with you always. Surrender yourself to Him and take His name. When you do thus, you cannot but chant His name with all love and devotion.

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True service done for the good of others is veritable worship of God. Inwardly you can be in tune with Him and outwardly serve Him by living a life of selfless service. It is not merely by doing Japa that you are serving God, but also when you are serving others honestly, conscientiously and in a spirit of dedication to Him. Then you will have the same peace and joy as you get by chanting or writing Ramnam. Carry on your activities cheerfully.

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In this life of bustle and distraction, it is absolutely necessary that the mind should, from time to time, be withdrawn from external things and fixed upon our supreme goal of life—God. It is by tuning our mind with Him alone we get the inner strength, light and peace so that we can carry on life's work usefully and in peace.

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Service of humanity does often involve conflicts. In the midst of this life, which is bristling with an inexplicable clash of opposites,

we have to steer clear of them while pursuing the path of truth and righteousness, which is the same as the path that leads us to God. God stands for absolute purity, truth, goodness and love.

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Difficulties come to all alike at one time or other. Life is so constituted that there are always ups and downs in it. But the hero is he who keeps the mind in a state of perfect equilibrium in all conditions and circumstances.

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Everything is really the manifestation of God. But you have to realize this truth. Merely saying so does not enable you to look upon everything as He. Experience is necessary. For gaining experience Sadhana is necessary.

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Whatever act you do in the name of God must be productive of good. So the pilgrimage will indeed be beneficial to all the members of the party in giving them an impetus in their spiritual journey. You must have begun to feel even now that the grace of God is a prominent factor evident in the course of your peregrinations.

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Love invites love. Selfishness is the root of all evil. The more we sacrifice for the real

good of others, without feeling any pride, the more easily we progress towards a steady well-balanced and cheerful life. There is more joy in self-sacrifice than in mere physical comforts and luxuries.

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Constant repetition of Ramnam will still the waves of the mind, and thoughts, as they come, will dissolve by themselves. Finally, you will attain a state of consciousness which is unchanging and eternal. The Name stands for Atman. To be in tune with the Name is to merge in the Atmic consciousness. In the ultimate realization, the mind ceases to exist, all thoughts disappear and you are filled with divine bliss and peace. This is the goal.

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If you feel conscious that Divine grace or Guru's grace is with you, that instant your mind will become perfectly pure and luminous. This requires faith and nothing but faith. Grace is ever showering on you. You have only to be conscious of it.

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It is cowardly to think of suicide or wish for death. Life is precious. It should be utilised for realising God. No external situation, however adverse, should daunt you. You

should push your way through with God's name on your lips.

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When you surrender yourself to God, He will look after you in every way. Lead a pure and good life. Be sympathetic over the sufferings of others. Control your mind and move with your relations and friends in a gentle and loving spirit. Such a conduct is conducive to your spiritual and material advancement. Do not worry!

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Submit to the will of God and give up worrying. Let success and failure be the same to you. What is the good of being a devotee of God without maintaining a state of inner equilibrium in all conditions of life? Truly, God does everything for the best. Be calm patient and contented.

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By attuning your mind to God through remembrance and meditation, and by service—done in a Nishkama spirit—of those in distress, the external activities will ultimately become spontaneous expressions of the divine Power acting in and through you. God is not merely a silent and still spirit, but is also the dynamic power active in the universe.

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You know Sadhana is done in order to know that by Sadhana alone we cannot attain Him. We can have Him only by His grace. This means that complete surrender to His will brings about the necessary inner transformation in the devotee. Thereafter the devotee lives, moves and has his being in the presence of God.

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Whatever way you have lived your past, let it be forgotten. Now you can turn over a new leaf. Your future is in your hands. You can make it or mar it. God is the one great help for all struggling souls. To hold on to Him means true release and happiness. But man, through wilful neglect and indifference, either forgets or denies Him with the result that he gets caught in the whirlpool of worldly life and suffers untold miseries.

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You should take it that the Guru Mantra is all in all. Do not bother about evil spirits and miracles. All experiences you have undergone so far are for your good. Your spiritual Sadhana should be intensified. You have no reason to blame anybody for your sufferings, for each one suffers on account of his Karma. Ask your sisters to take God's name constantly. Love begets love. Make this the guiding

principle of your life. Have full trust in God and He will see that you and yours are protected. Let not the past worry you. Forget it. Live in the remembrance of God now, from moment to moment, and be calm and peaceful.

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Swadharma is the Dharma which enables you by its observance to realize God. Your vocation may be anything, but what you do should be honest work, constituting service of others. Then, by remembrance and meditation, tune your mind with God. This is Swadharma.

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The ultimate end of spiritual endeavour is not only to merge oneself in the supreme Consciousness, but also to retain in a mysterious way a personal existence. How these contradictions can be reconciled is a mystery. Perhaps our poor intellect, which moves only in a limited sphere, cannot grasp this truth. The best thing is to realize that supreme state by performing the needed Sadhana and know for oneself by experience what that supreme attainment is.

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God wills and all things happen. He has assumed various forms for the sake of Lila.

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Obstacles do come on the path of devotion. But you must be brave and place perfect reliance on God and take His holy name constantly. Then you will find the very obstacles prove to be helpful in your spiritual progress. Purity of mind is essential. By constant remembrance of God you will achieve this purity and progress rapidly on the spiritual path.

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Saints always bless the aspirants for their spiritual progress, and their grace is ever pouring on them. Be conscious of this and push forward. Wherever you are, God is with you. Only you have to be aware of Him. This you can do by constant repetition of His name, which is the same as remembrance of Him.

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You have complained against your father. This is not at all fair. You have to put up with the conduct of your father. You should not sit in judgment over him. By love and service, you can gain his goodwill. Take to the repetition of God's name. By this practice your mind will be calm and tranquil and the atmosphere round about you will be one of peace. This is the remedy for your sufferings, which seem to be mostly mind-made.

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It is true, the repression of sex is sometimes the cause of mental derangement. You should, by proper Sadhana, turn your mind towards God and keep it more and more engaged in His meditation. This will grant you control and purity of mind, and slowly the sex-idea will disappear, replaced by divine light and peace. For turning your mind towards God, repetition of His name with all faith and devotion is the easiest Sadhana.

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When you transcend the Gunas and are established in the Atman, you will remain perennially blissful. When you have the knowledge of the Atman and then behold the universe as the expression of it, then there is no more fall from that state. Divinisation should take place on all planes of life—physical, mental and spiritual. Then the devotee is filled with bliss in all conditions of life. This is spiritual perfection.

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Intensity of love for God comes only when we are entirely free from worldly worries, i.e., when we have dedicated our life to Him. That was what saints like Mira, Tukaram and Chaitanya, who attained the highest spiritual illumination, did.

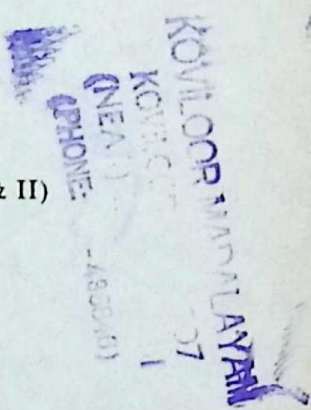
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Part II

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After receiving initiation of the *Ram Mantra* from his father, Swami Ramdas, who was then known as Vittal Rao, renounced the worldly life in 1922 and wandered as a mendicant Sadhu all over India and in the Himalayas, in a frenzy of God-intoxication, with the holy and all-powerful *Ram Mantra* ever on his tongue and with God as his only refuge and guide. His was the completest surrender to the Will of God.

Many years of wandering life brought him finally back to South Kanara. Having attained spiritual liberation and God-vision, he started his mission to guide and serve mankind in order to awaken it to the awareness of God. He founded an Ashram—named Anandashram—near Kanhangad, North Kerala, which is fostered by love and care by Mother Krishna-bai, his foremost disciple and a Self-realised soul.

Swami Ramdas' writings come from the deeps of Reality and therefore go straight to the heart. In 1954, he and Mother Krishnabai went on a world tour and hundreds of their devotees, friends and admirers, who had loved and venerated them from a distance, had a chance to come into close contact with them. Since the last three decades Anandashram has been a powerful spiritual beacon, and thousands have been constantly visiting it, carrying home with them the torch of Light, Love and Service lit at the feet of the great Master.

Swami Ramdas attained *mahanirvana* in July 1963.